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# IOWA AND THE FIRST NOMINATION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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Social Science, Drake University

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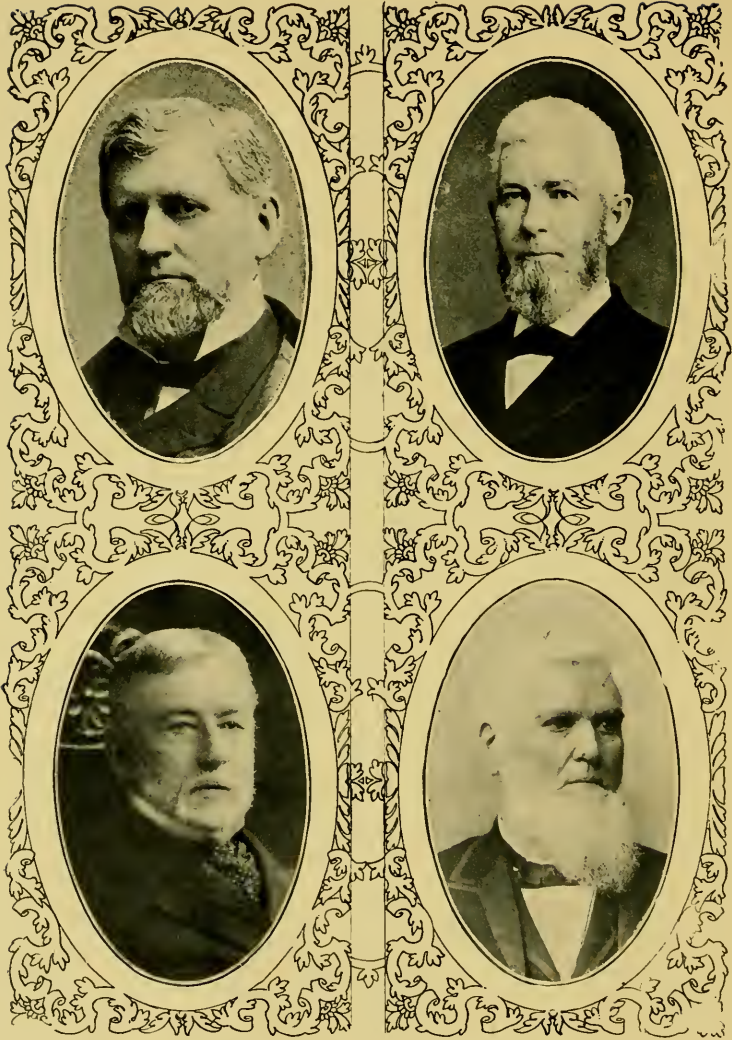
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## SOME OF IOWA'S DELEGATES

Chicago Convention, May 16-18, 1860



WILLIAM B. ALLISON,  
U. S. Senator

JOHN A. KASSON  
U. S. Diplomat

JAMES F. WILSON,  
U. S. Senator

ALVIN SAUNDERS,  
U. S. Senator

# IOWA AND THE FIRST NOMINATION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

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Professor of Economics, Political and Social Science,  
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The delegates from Iowa will go to Chicago to nominate a Presidential ticket—the strongest ticket possible—and to this end will be glad to listen to the suggestions of well informed friends at Washington or elsewhere, but they go unpledged, uncommitted, and fully at liberty to hear all suggestions and then to do what shall commend itself to their unfettered judgment as best for the cause. As it is in Iowa, so it will be elsewhere. —Horace Greeley (Feb. 8, 1860).<sup>1</sup>

. . . the blot does not rest upon the history of the Union, that this [Lincoln's nomination] the most fate-pregnant decision which an American convention had ever to make, was brought about by blind chance in combination with base intriguers. Far from it. It was the conscious act of clear-sighted and self-sacrificing patriots to whom honor and gratitude in the fullest measure are due.—Von Holst (1892).<sup>2</sup>

## I.

### EXPECTATIONS AND THE MEAGRE MINUTES.

The average Iowan is wont to indulge in the presumption that Iowa's politicians and statesmen have always played prominent parts in our national affairs. While often expressed in language more exuberant and vasty than modesty or truth sanctions, the assumption is fairly well founded. In recent years no one will gainsay this State's prominence in our Federal councils. Fifty and sixty years ago the case was likewise. Iowa's chiefs commanded attention and exacted consideration in the conduct of the national government.

Mr. James G. Blaine in closing his characterization of the leaders of the Senate at Washington in the momentous session of 1850, says: "Dodge of Wisconsin and Dodge of Iowa, father and son, represented the Democracy of the remotest

(1) *New York Tribune*, Feb. 17, 1860.—Extract from letter dated at Mansfield, Ohio, written after making circuit of the Northwestern States.

(2) *Constitutional and Political History of the United States*, Vol. VII, p. 173.

outposts of the North-West. . . . At no time, before or since in the history of the Senate has its membership been so illustrious, its weight of character and ability so great."<sup>1</sup> Henry Dodge, father, was Iowa's first Governor *de facto* when the State was a part of Wisconsin (1836-38).<sup>2</sup> In the country at large Iowa was regarded as a stronghold of the democracy and her first Senators, A. C. Dodge and Geo. W. Jones, were considerable factors in the party councils of Presidents Pierce and Buchanan. Both men were given important diplomatic posts when the political revolution in Iowa enforced their retirement from the Senate, the former at Madrid and the latter at Bogota. At the National Democratic Convention in Charleston in 1860, the Douglas forces triumphed in the struggle over the platform and we are told that it was "skillfully accomplished under the lead of Henry B. Payne of Ohio and Benjamin Samuels of Iowa."<sup>3</sup>

In President Taylor's short-lived administration, an Iowan, Fitz Henry Warren of Burlington, acquired fame as Assistant Postmaster-General by his swift elimination of Democratic office-holders,<sup>4</sup> and his resignation because of indignation over Fillmore's apostasy on the subject of slavery. Afterwards, in 1852, he became the Secretary of the National Executive Committee of the Whig party in the Pierce-Scott canvass.<sup>5</sup> Later the pages of J. S. Pike show us that the brilliant flashes of Warren's pen made him a forceful factor in the determination of anti-slavery opinion and procedure.<sup>6</sup> It was his clarion calls in 1861 that aroused the furore in the north against the inactivity of the new administration and forced the precipitate movement "On to Richmond" which ended in the disastrous rout at Bull Run.<sup>7</sup>

(1) B'aine's *Twenty Years of Congress*, Vol. 1, p. 90.

(2) Governor Robert Lucas, first Territorial Governor of Iowa, 1838-41, was the permanent chairman of the first National Democratic Convention, that met in Baltimore, May 21, 1832. See Parish's *Robert Lucas*, p. 111.

(3) B'aine. *Ibid.*, p. 162; McClure's *Our Presidents and How We Make them*, p. 167.

(4) Ben Perley Poore. *Reminiscences*, Vol. I, p. 355.

(5) *Annals of Iowa* (3d ser.), Vol. VI, p. 486.

(6) Pike's *First Blows of the Civil War*, pp. 483-4, 496; and Von Holst's Vol. VII, pp. 155, 157.

(7) Letters from Washington to *New York Tribune*; see Mr. E. H. Stiles, *Annals* *Ib.*, 487-490. It is not unlikely that President Lincoln's refusal to appoint him Postmaster-General, for which he was earnestly pushed by Iowans, made Warren's ink more acid than otherwise.

The triumph of James W. Grimes in 1854 made him a national figure. His election as Governor was a surprise to the entire country. This was not strange for Iowa was looked upon as a "hot-bed of dough faces,"<sup>1</sup> and the annals of the *ante bellum* period contain no clearer, stronger, or more courageous pronouncement against the aggressions of the Slavocrats than his address "To the People of Iowa" when he accepted the nomination for Governor.<sup>2</sup> His election was mostly his personal achievement and not the result, as it would be nowadays, of organization and widely concerted effort. Senator Chase of Ohio wrote the new champion that he had waged "the best battle for freedom yet fought."<sup>3</sup> Giddings declared that he had made "the true issue" on which the battle had to be fought in the northern States.<sup>4</sup> In the Senate from 1859 to 1869 he was distinguished "for iron will and sound judgment"<sup>5</sup> and became, says Perley Poore "a tower of strength for the administration" in the crises of the war.<sup>6</sup>

Grimes's victory in 1854 sent James Harlan to the Senate in 1856. He, too, says a distinguished historian, immediately made his "mark."<sup>7</sup> His speech on the Leecompton Constitution won Seward's admiration.<sup>8</sup> The Republican Association at Washington printed and sold at a low price Senator Harlan's speeches along with those of Collamer, Hale, Seward and Henry Wilson.<sup>9</sup> Harlan was a statesman the country reckoned with, Mr. Blaine telling us that he later became "one of Mr. Lincoln's most valued and most confidential friends and subsequently a member of his cabinet."<sup>10</sup>

No fact, in the writer's judgment, indicates more strikingly the potency of Iowa's influence at Washington fifty years ago than President Lincoln's appointment in the forepart of his first term of Samuel F. Miller as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. He was endorsed strongly by Iowa's bench and bar and by others in States adjacent. The President, however, delayed making the appointment. Upon per-

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(1) Von Holst, Vol. V, p. 78. (2) Salter's *Life of Grimes*, pp. 34-50. (3) *Ib.*, p. 54. (4) *Ib.*, p. 63. (5) Blaine, *Ib.*, p. 321. (6) Poore, *Ib.*, Vol. II, p. 100. (7) Rhodes' *History of U. S.*, Vol. II, p. 130. (8) Pike's *First Blows*, etc., p. 417. (9) Rhodes, *Ib.*, p. 131. (10) Blaine, *Ib.*, p. 321.



sonal inquiry, Mr. John A. Kasson, then Assistant Postmaster-General, learned that the reputation of the Keokuk lawyer "had not then even extended so far as to Springfield, Illinois" (a distance but little over one hundred miles).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless the appointment was made and Justice Miller became almost immediately the "dominant personality" of our great court.<sup>2</sup> The significance of his elevation is this—President Lincoln was not a petty spoilsman and he had no special fondness for the office monger; but he was a politician *par excellence*. He made appointments with an eye single to the public good, which was then the preservation of the Union, yet he always gave close attention to the influence of the Potentialities back of the aspirants for office who pressed their claims upon him.<sup>3</sup> Government is not a philosophical abstraction or an academic thesis. It is a constantly shifting balance of contrary and divergent forces and interests. It was essential to success in combating the nation's enemies at the front for the President so to co-ordinate factors and control conditions behind him as to assure him at once non-interference and efficient support. Justice Miller's appointment must have appeared to President Lincoln not only creditable and safe, but eminently worth while, insuring strength upon the bench and influential support for his administration, both in Congress and in Iowa. Besides consideration of the influence of Iowa's leaders we should naturally presume that recollections of the prominent part taken by Iowans on his behalf in the Convention that first nominated him for the Presidency played no small part in deciding President Lincoln to select the then but little known jurist of Keokuk.

This presumption, however, is apparently upset if the curious make casual inquiry. There is nothing whatever in the record of the proceedings of the Convention showing that Iowa did anything for any candidate worthy of special note or remembrance. One of Iowa's delegates moved an amendment to a motion to thank Chicago's Board of Trade for an invi-

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(1) Mr. John A. Kasson to Charles Aldrich—letter dated Washington, D. C., Nov. 10, 1893. See *Annals*, Vol. I, p. 252. (2) Characterization of Chief Justice Chase quoted in *Annals*, *ib.*, p. 247. (3) See Mr. Horace White's introduction to Herndon & Weik's *Lincoln*, Vol. I, p. XXII.

tation to an excursion on Lake Michigan.<sup>1</sup> Another delegate secured an amendment allowing each State to choose its member of the National Committee as it pleased.<sup>2</sup> When the Committee on Credentials reported that Iowa had “appointed eight delegates from each Congressional district [Iowa had only two] and sixteen Senatorial delegates,” when entitled to but eight votes, the minutes record “[laughter].”<sup>3</sup> In the entire proceedings of the Convention, Iowa is credited with but one significant performance and that was manifestly either a blunder due to excitement or a play to the galleries—A delegate elicited “great applause” by seconding the nomination of Abraham Lincoln “in the name of two-thirds of the delegation of Iowa.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, on the first ballot immediately following, Iowa gave Lincoln only two votes, or one-fourth of her quota; and on the third ballot even when it was clear that the candidate of Illinois was almost certain to be nominated Iowa gave over a third of her vote to other candidates.<sup>5</sup> After Mr. Cartter of Ohio changed four of Chase’s votes to Lincoln and decided the result then a delegate from Iowa joined the chorus and on behalf of the delegation moved to make it unanimous.<sup>6</sup> But there is nothing in all this that denotes conspicuous achievement or influence, neither staunch service nor effective generalship such as politicians exact.

If we turn to formal histories or accounts of national currency or general use our presumption is further seriously disturbed. Iowa’s influence in the nomination seems to have been conspicuous chiefly by its absence. There are no references to Iowans whatever in scores of volumes relating the events of the convention week. One would almost imagine that Iowa’s men were not present at all. In practically but one case has the writer found mention of Iowa’s influence in a favorable connection and even here the assertion is disputed. In two other instances distinguished national historians refer to her representatives in Chicago in derogatory terms that

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(1) *Proceedings of the First Three Republican National Conventions of 1856, 1860, 1864*, published by Charles W. Johnson, p. 91. (2) *Ib.*, p. 107. (3) *Ib.*, p. 110. (4) *Ib.*, p. 149. (5) *Ib.*, pp. 149, 153. (6) *Ib.*, p. 154.

seem to imply conduct not worthy of commendation or respect.

In spite of appearances thus to the contrary there are substantial reasons for thinking that men from Iowa played an influential part in bringing the Convention to what Von Holst declares was "the most fate-pregnant decision which an American Convention ever had to make," verifying precisely Horace Greeley's prediction three months before, to-wit, "As it is in Iowa, so it will be elsewhere." In what follows I shall deal with the animadversions referred to and then exhibit the growth of Republican sentiment in Iowa regarding the Presidential nomination, the character of Iowa's delegates, and the nature of their work in the Convention.

## II.

### DID CLANS OR CHIEFS CONTROL THE CONVENTION?

Notwithstanding Professor Von Holst's conclusive demonstration to the contrary<sup>1</sup> there still prevails a widespread notion that the first nomination of Abraham Lincoln was received by the country at large with surprise and shock, a consummation believed to be the issue of either cabals and machinations against New York's candidate or the irrational overwhelming influence of a shouting, surging mob round about the delegates, or of both combined. This notion is not a common popular prejudice merely, but the deliberate conclusion of academic chroniclers and savants.<sup>2</sup> In a general way Mr. James Ford Rhodes seems to agree with Von Holst's presentation of the major facts and their interpretation, us-

(1) Von Holst, *History*, Vol. VII, pp. 149-186. (2) Judge J. V. Quarles in *Putnam's Monthly*, Vol. II, p. 59 (April, 1907), says that the nomination was a "tremendous surprise"; Admiral French E. Chadwick in *Causes of the Civil War, 1859-1861* (Amer. Nation: A History, Prof. A. B. Hart, editor, Vol 19, 1906), says "the result was a shock of surprise to the country at large," p. 119; Dr. Guy Carlton Lee in *The True History of the Civil War* (1903), says: "The nomination was received with a shock of surprise by the country," and he adds Wendell Phillips' harsh exclamation in *The Liberator*, "Who is this huckster in politics?" Goldwin Smith in *The United States* (1893), p. 241, says: "But it was mainly to cabal against Seward that Lincoln owed the Republican nomination"; Professor Alex. Johnston says: "Much of the opposition to Seward came from the mysterious ramifications of factions in New York." Lalor's *Cyclopedia of Political and Social Science* (1882), reprinted in his *Amer. Political History*, [edited by Professor J. C. Woodburn, 1906], Vol. II, p. 212.



ing the same or similar evidence. But the sweep and implications of his assertions give color and substance to the general opinion. In his account of the conditions precedent and determining the developments and results during the Convention week, May 14-18, 1860, Mr. Rhodes makes the following statements in his *History of the United States*, Vol. II:

Contrasting the Republican National Conventions of 1856 and 1860, he says: \* \* \* then [1856] the wire pullers looked askance at a movement whose success was problematical, now [1860] they hastened to identify themselves with a party that apparently had the game in its own hands; then the delegates were liberty-loving enthusiasts and largely volunteers, now the delegates had been chosen by means of the organization peculiar to a powerful party, and in political wisdom were the pick of the Republicans (p. 457).

Seward's claim for the nomination was strong. \* \* \* Intensely anxious for the nomination, and confidently expecting it, he was alike the choice of the politicians and the people. Could a popular vote on the subject have been taken, the majority in the Republican States would have been overwhelmingly in his favor. One day at Chicago sufficed to demonstrate that he had the support of the machine politicians (p. 460).

While much of the outside volunteer attendance from New York and Michigan favoring Seward was weighty in character as well as imposing in number, the organized body of rough fellows from New York City, under the lead of Tom Hyer, a noted bruiser, made a great deal of noise without helping his cause. \* \* \* All the outside pressure was for Seward or Lincoln, there being practically none for the other candidates. While many of Seward's followers were disinterested and sincere, others betrayed unmistakably the influence of the machine. *Lincoln's adherents were men from Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa, who had come to Chicago bent on having a good time and seeing the rail-splitter nominated, and while traces of organization might be detected among them, it was such organization as may be seen in a mob* (pp. 462-463). (Italics here.)

Several important facts are clearly asserted in the foregoing and some serious implications are no less apparent. First, politicians and wire pullers rather than earnest self-sacrificing patriots made up the dominant forces of the Chicago Convention of 1860. Second, Seward was the choice of the politicians and people alike. Third, honesty or sincerity was for the most part lacking among the rank and file of Seward's followers at Chicago; fourth, earnestness or serious purpose was notably absent from the followers of Mr.

Lincoln. By "adherents" he apparently refers chiefly to the "volunteer outside influence," namely, unofficial attendants, rather than to accredited delegates. Yet the comprehensiveness and variable sweep of portions of previous paragraphs suggest that a first impression that delegates were also included is not unwarranted. And, fifth, Mr. Rhodes would have us conclude, we may infer, that Lincoln's nomination was an amazing conclusion resulting from the variable but coercive suggestions of a dominant organized mob. It is but fair to say, however, that Mr. Rhodes seems to shrink from this last conclusion, for later he says: "One wonders if those wise and experienced delegates<sup>1</sup> interpreted this manipulated noise as the voice of the people" (p. 468).

Since Edmund Burke confessed his inability to discover "a method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people," scholars and scientists have not deemed it appropriate or safe to condemn institutions, parties or governments, let alone peoples *en bloc*. Mr. Rhodes is not a pseudo-historian who imagines that cynical contempt for the commonality is a solid basis for historical scholarship; and he does not proceed on the assumption that all men in politics are scamps or scoundrels, although he squints occasionally in that direction. He has deserved renown as a scientific historian who depends upon extensive and minute researches and basic facts, whose narrative is characterized by judicial balance and impartiality, by caution and sobriety of statement. Common prudence makes one hesitate to question his assertions or conclusions. Nevertheless several queries are pertinent which are not wholly academic for there are scores, probably hundreds of men still living, men of eminence in letters and politics in many cases, who took part in that conclave at Chicago. I shall not here undertake to discuss all the phases of the assertions referred to except indirectly as they affect the character or conduct of Iowa's representatives at the Convention.

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(1) Enlarging upon Blaine's notation (*Twenty Years of Congress*, Vol. I, p. 164), Mr. Rhodes gives a list of some of "the many noted men, or men who afterwards became so," mentioning e. g. E. H. Rollins (N. H.), John A. Andrews, George S. Boutwell, E. L. Pierce (Mass.), Gideon Wells, William M. Evarts and George W. Curtis, David Wilmot and Thaddeus Stevens, Francis P. and Montgomery Blair, Carl Schurz, "John A. Kasson of Iowa," p. 469.

We may take the statements involving the character and conduct of the Iowans in one of two ways. Either the writer meant all that the paragraph implies or he did not mean to be taken strictly. In either case we may ask if character and sincerity were confined conspicuously to the unofficial Seward supporters hailing from New York and Michigan and hence his discrimination of them in the forefront of the paragraph whence the quotation. There were ardent admirers of the statesman of Auburn from Iowa as well as from Massachusetts who mingled in the throngs that surged the lobbies of the Tremont and Richmond Hotels; such men as Fitz Henry Warren of Burlington and Samuel A. Bowles of *The Springfield Republican*. Men of like character and local fame by scores and hundreds were with them from the same States and from Wisconsin and Minnesota, and other States as well; men who worked just as earnestly for Senator Seward and felt the bitter disappointment of his defeat as keenly as did his followers from Michigan and New York. Seward sentiment in Iowa, as will be shown in some detail later, was intense, staunch and wide-spread and when the news of his non-success came his partisans in many a community almost wept in grief and vexation and gloom held them for awhile.<sup>1</sup>

Another implication that seems to be necessarily involved in the discrimination made in the citation under review is that there was an utter absence of weighty character and sincerity among the "outside volunteer" followers of other candidates. Such a conclusion doubtless was not contemplated nor desired perhaps. If so, it may seem unkind to take the statement in all its rigor, but words are rather flinty substances and if thrown recklessly and they strike, hurt and mar. Such a construction is not a captious inference. The

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(1) Hon. W. G. Donnan, a Representative of Iowa in the Forty-Second and Forty-third Congresses (1871-75), was born and educated in New York. He came to Iowa in 1856. In 1860 (as now), he resided at Independence, and was a strong admirer of Seward. In a letter to the writer (February 4, 1907), he says: "Went over from Union College, where I was then a student, and heard Seward's great speech, organizing the Republican party. Could have wept when 'the Great New Yorker' failed of the nomination. How fortunate for the country and the party that Lincoln was made the nominee."

uninformed or indiscriminating reader usually rests with first impressions and the impression made is not favorable to the people and representatives of other States. In these halcyon days we are used to wholesale indictments of public men and political conventions in our partisan press and periodicals that retail the "literature of exposure;" but we do not expect them from scholars who work in the clear, cool air and the dry, white light of a library.

But what is the significance and what is the justification of the assertion that "Lincoln's adherents were men from Illinois, Indiana and Iowa who had come to Chicago bent on having a good time?" Why such a discrimination? Were the admirers and promoters of the "Rail-Splitter" more inclined to that sort of thing than the crowds that shouted for "Old Irrepressible?" What is meant by a "good time," harmless diversion or reprehensible license?

With pious and proper persons a good time implies nothing more serious than an excursion or picnic with its mild ecstasies and hysterics. No doubt hundreds and thousands, when they joined the throngs bound for Chicago, thought only of the cheap rates and seeing the crowds and "the sights" of the city. Among gay lords and certain politicians, however, a good time signifies often, if not generally, fun and frolic that begins with huge fuss and noise and reckless abandon that, unless curbed, rapidly runs the leeways into riot and carousal. If the latter is meant is there any special reason to suppose that Lincoln's adherents had a greater predisposition in that direction than the workers for Seward from the same States or from other States!

Mr. Rhodes is usually careful to give his authorities, chapter and verse, for his important assertions. He cites accounts of several participants in the Convention, Messrs. Greeley, Welles and Halstead for statements in the first part of the paragraph, but there is none given upon the point here referred to. Their reports, however, do not seem to warrant any such differentiation. If we are to believe Mr. Halstead's particular and synchronous account there were few if any States whose representatives were not largely given to noisy demonstration, intemperance and rowdyism. If any State achieved

sorry pre-eminence in this respect it was New York and not any western State.<sup>1</sup>

If the truth, and nothing but the truth, should be told in its painful particulars anent this common phase of political conventions some excerpts from Halstead's racy narrative should have been reproduced. On board the train carrying easterners to Chicago, including New Englanders probably, New Yorkers, Pennsylvanians and Ohioans certainly, he found a degree of intoxication that was "much greater" than that he witnessed on trains entering Charleston at the Democratic convention a few weeks before. The number of "private bottles" was "something surprising;" and "our Western Reserve was thrown into prayers and perspiration last night by some New Yorkers who were singing songs not found in hymn books." As to conditions in Chicago he avers: "I do not feel competent to state the precise proportions of those who are drunk and those who are sober. There are a large number of both classes; and the drunken are of course the most conspicuous and according to the principle of the numerical force of the black sheep in a flock the most multitudinous."<sup>2</sup> He was compelled to sleep in a room in his hotel that was full of revellers in a state of "glorious" exhilaration "o'er all the ills of life victorious;" and "irrepressible" until a late hour. In the morning he was aroused by the "vehement debate" of a galaxy of volunteers or delegates sitting up in bed "playing cards to see who would pay for gin cocktails all around, the cocktails being considered an indispensable preliminary to breakfast."<sup>3</sup> He does not inform us whether those assiduous patriots were adherents of Bates or Chase, Seward or Lincoln. Another paragraph written later may indicate: "The New Yorkers here are of a class unknown to western Republican politicians. They can drink as much whisky, swear as loud and long, sing as bad songs and 'get up and howl' as ferociously as any crowd of Democrats you ever heard or heard of."<sup>4</sup>

All of which, if true, only makes for tears. But the fact is

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(1) Halstead's *Conventions of 1860*, p. 121: See also Carl Schurz's *Reminiscences of a Long Life*, *McClure's Magazine*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 413. (February, 1907). (2) Halstead, p. 121.

(3) *Ib.*, p. 122. (4) *Ib.*, p. 110.



utterly fallacious if it suggests the conclusion that such men numerically predominated in the Chicago Convention or that noise and the maudlin influence and inanities of hysterical and intoxicated men chiefly controlled the deliberations or decisions of the duly accredited representatives of the Republican party into whose hands the freemen of the north had committed a great cause. The people everywhere throughout the north were conscious that the Convention held the Nation's fate in its hands. Old party lines had fast disappeared. One common cause, one common fear lest slavery should engulf them, made partisans forget their differences and unite. They knew that fortune was with the Republicans if wisdom controlled their councils. Lincoln's searching questions at Freeport in 1858 and Douglas' fatal answer "no matter what may be the decision of the Supreme Court" had split the Democracy in twain at Charleston.<sup>1</sup> The people of the north with common impulse journeyed to Chicago because they were certain as were the yeoman and gentry journeying to Naseby that a spectacle was to be witnessed—their leaders and their cohorts in contention for championship and the right to lead the Lord's hosts against a common foe. As to the character and conduct of the throngs and contestants the reports of two eye-witnesses may suffice. Writing home to his paper *The Guardian* (May 16) Mr. Jacob Rich, then of Independence, one of Iowa's most forceful editors in those days and later a Warwick himself in our politics said:

It is a matter of universal comment that if the whole country had been methodically picked over, there could scarcely have been procured a concourse containing the same amount of ability and respectability as is manifested by the immense crowd in attendance on the Convention. The great mass of the men on the platform as delegates are men of age, of experience, of reputation, of judgment. Gray heads and bald heads are in the ascendant which bespeaks for the action of the Convention calmness and deliberation. In fact, inside and outside there seems to be less of boisterous enthusiasm than earnest, thoughtful action—fewer ebullitions of zeal than exhibitions of determination and confidence. Still, livelier demonstrations are not wanting.

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(1) On his train going to Charleston, Mr. Halstead says: "The Mississippians have the Freeport speech of Douglas with them and intend to bombard him in the Convention with ammunition drawn from it." *Ib.*, p. 6.

Mr. Rich was young then and perhaps prejudiced as young men sometimes are, and he may not have estimated correctly, but the late Carl Schurz, who always saw clearly and spoke his mind, essentially agrees with his conclusions. Reviewing in the evening of his life the events of his great career Mr. Schurz says of that Convention in which he took no small part:

The members of the Convention and the thousands of spectators assembled in the great Wigwam presented a grand and inspiring sight. It was a free people met to consult upon their policy and to choose their chief. To me it was like the fulfillment of all the dreams of my youth.<sup>1</sup>

There is another assumption or implication in the narrative quoted above that is common in the majority of accounts of the Chicago Convention, namely, that the crowds in the city at the time consisted chiefly of the friends of the "Rail-Splitter." New York's candidate had his workers to be sure, but they were, so to speak, mostly organized troops or regulars, bands and marching clubs, e. g., Gilmore's band from Massachusetts and Tom Hyer's contingent from New York, whereas the militia, the masses, the crowds, "the mob" that surged the hotel lobbies and the streets were the plain people who had come to Chicago to work for Honest Abe.

It is difficult to reconcile this common notion with ante-

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(1) *McClure's Magazine*, Ib., p. 416.

Besides Fitz Henry Warren, Mr. Jacob Rich, and Governor S. J. Kirkwood mentioned above, Iowa's volunteer attendance at the Chicago convention included among others—Mr. James B. Howell, then editor of *The Gate City* of Keokuk and later U. S. Senator from Iowa; Mr. James B. Weaver of Bloomfield, soon afterward Brevetted Brig. General for distinguished gallantry at Ft. Donelson, Shiloh and Corinth, who represented Iowa several times in Congress, and in 1880 and 1896 was a nominee of a national party for the Presidency receiving, in 1896, 1,042,531 votes and 22 ballots in the Electoral College; Mr. James Thornton, of Davenport, a member of Congress from Iowa 1855-57; Mr. Hiram Price also of Davenport who represented Iowa for eight years in Congress; Judge John F. Dillon, likewise of Davenport, then a judge of the district court, afterwards Chief Justice of Iowa, U. S. Circuit Judge 1869-79, Professor in Columbia Law School, distinguished writer on legal subjects—the author of a classic on *Municipal Corporations* and an inspiring treatise on the *Laws and Jurisprudence of England and the United States*; Mr. Amos N. Currier, then instructor in Central University of Pella, who a few days since retired from active service as Dean of the College of Liberal Arts of the State University of Iowa; Mr. F. W. Palmer then of Dubuque, who had served two terms in the legislature of New York and who later represented Iowa for two sessions in Congress 1869-1873, and later editor of *The Inter Ocean* of Chicago.

cedent probabilities resting on sundry facts that were notorious at the time and that are obvious in nearly every account of the Convention extant. Historians and biographers of the chief candidates all declare with little or no qualification that the country at large expected Mr. Seward's nomination. Most of them assert that the country was "shocked" at least "surprised" at his defeat. Col. A. K. McClure has always maintained that "two-thirds of the delegates" wanted to vote for Seward.<sup>1</sup> Being in a large sense direct representatives of local sentiment in their several States is it probable that the crowds which poured into Chicago along with them from all points of the compass to cheer and support their delegates were contrary minded! Lawyers would pronounce this notion a violent presumption.

Outside of the delegates who finally voted for Lincoln all the visitors from New England, excepting probably Connecticut, were almost certainly friends of Seward. New York's contingent, excepting the few following the lead of Greeley and Dudley Field, was all for Weed and Seward. So it must have been with the crowds that poured in from Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. "Bleeding Kansas" was staunch for their champion in the Senate. Northern Indiana and Illinois were both strongly tinctured with Sewardism, those sections having been settled largely by New Englanders and New Yorkers, the leaders of both delegations from those States having hard work to hold some of the delegates from breaking away.<sup>2</sup>

Three-fourths of Iowa's Republicans probably went to Chicago desiring and expecting Seward's nomination because such was the hope in the strongly Republican communities of Iowa. Down in Lee county round about Keokuk a "perfect revolution in sentiment" in favor of Seward took place between March 15-30. His Senate speech (March 1) says an Iowan's letter quoted in *The Tribune*, March 30, "seems to have set our

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(1) Leonard Swett's Letter to Joshua H. Drummond, May 27, 1860, partially printed in Oldroyd's *Lincoln's Campaign*, p. 71; McClure's *Lincoln and War Times*, p. 28; *Our Presidents and How We Make Them*, p. 155; and a letter to the writer, May 6, 1907. (2) Authority for statement as to Indiana, a letter of Col. A. C. Voris, of Bedford, Ind., (one of her delegates) to the writer, May 3, 1907.



prairies on fire with Republican enthusiasm for him and his teachings.”<sup>1</sup> Writing Governor Kirkwood May 13, three days before the delegates convened in Chicago, Eliphalet Price, of Elkader, in northeast Iowa, a keen and earnest Republican, declared “that nine-tenths of the Republicans north prefer Seward there can be no doubt.” Out in then remote Sioux City the Republicans “expected” Seward’s nomination at Chicago.<sup>2</sup> When the news reached Sioux City “a feeling of incredulity and disappointment,” says *The Times*, May 25, “prevailed at first. Here where party ties are weak and party lines loose most Republicans favored the nomination of Bates and Hickman. Seward had some admirers.”

New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Ohio, Maryland and Missouri, certainly did not send Lincoln delegations or crowds to Chicago. Connecticut sent a Bates delegation. So did Indiana. Although neighbors it took three days’ hard work on the part of Messrs. Davis, Judd, Logan, Palmer and Swett to persuade Indiana’s delegates to abandon Bates and go to Lincoln. It is true that all of the delegates of the States mentioned turned to Lincoln eventually, but that is another matter.

Reason and rhyme alike require us to expect that the crowds which played such a conspicuous role at the Convention were either predominantly for Seward or not *prima facie* for Lincoln. One fact makes it almost necessary to think so. Abraham Lincoln was not formally put in nomination for the Presidency by the Illinois Republicans until May 10, six days before the Convention was to assemble. His managers, as Mr. Blaine long ago observed, had “with sound discretion” kept his name back.<sup>3</sup> A few papers of Illinois had advocated his nomination, but not with such vigor as to prevent the resolution instructing the delegates to work for his nomination being declared a “surprise” to the Decatur Convention itself.<sup>4</sup> “Lincoln’s own delegation from Illinois,” says Colonel McClure, “embraced one-third of positive Seward men. They were instructed for Lincoln with no hope of his nomina-

<sup>1</sup> *New York Tribune* (semi-w.) March 30. <sup>2</sup> Hon. E. H. Hubbard to writer, April 22, 1907. The writer is indebted to Mr. J. C. C. Hoskins of Sioux City for the extract from the *Sioux City Times*. <sup>3</sup> Blaine’s *Twenty Years*, p. 167. <sup>4</sup> *Ib.*, 168.

tion at the time.”<sup>1</sup> The mass of the people in northern Illinois and through the north—the general promiscuous population we call the “public”—who swarmed to Chicago were hardly alive to the fact that Abraham Lincoln was a candidate of high potential. Even after reaching the city the crowds could at first see few or no signs that would normally impel the miscellaneous and irresponsible elements that make up a convention crowd to join Lincoln’s cohorts with enthusiasm. Up until midnight preceding the nominations the chances were clearly in favor of Seward. Thursday midnight says Mr. Halstead “Greeley was terrified” and sent his celebrated dispatch conceding Seward’s victory and Mr. Halstead telegraphed *The Cincinnati Commercial* likewise.<sup>2</sup>

This discouragement of the anti-Seward men was no less decided among Lincoln’s adherents. Anxiety and depression among them were general and obvious. They slept scarcely at all, they were so fearful and active. Col. Alvin Saunders, Mr. Chas. C. Nourse and Gov. S. J. Kirkwood were probably the most influential Lincoln workers among the Iowans. “Early in the evening of the night before the nomination was to be made,” says Mr. Nourse, “I had gone up to my room to get some rest. I was fagged by the long strain of the day. The outlook for Lincoln was gloomy, indeed. I recall Saunders coming in. He was depressed and dubious about our chances of overcoming the New Yorkers. Kirkwood came in later. He was nervous and very uneasy and glum.”<sup>3</sup> It was not until the small hours of the next morning that their hopes of success became energetic.

If these facts have any significance whatever they seem to compel the conclusion that in the forepart of the week at least and in all probability on Wednesday and Thursday the crowds or mobs were more inclined toward Seward than toward Lincoln. It can scarcely be doubted that the correspondent of *The New York Times* signing himself “Howard” was correct when on Monday night, May 14, he telegraphed

<sup>1</sup> McClure’s *Our Presidents*, p. 155; Leonard Swett says there were eight out of the twenty-two Illinois delegates favorable to Seward, Oldroyd, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Halstead, p. 141. <sup>3</sup> Interview with Hon. Chas. C. Nourse, Attorney-General of Iowa, 1861-1865, Des Moines, Iowa, April 26 and May 12, 1907.

**SOME OF IOWA'S DELEGATES AT LARGE**

**Chicago Convention, May 16-18, 1860**



**JOHN W. RANKIN,**  
State Senator

**M. L. McPHERSON,**  
State Senator

**L. C. NOBLE,**  
Merchant

**COKER F. CLARKSON,**  
State Senator

**NICHOLAS J. RUSCH,**  
Lieutenant Governor

**H. P. SCHOLTE,**  
Minister

**JOHN JOHNS,**  
Minister



that "Illinois alone works hard for Lincoln."<sup>1</sup> Commenting in 1883 on his grandfather's defeat (viz. Weed's), Greeley's defection and the fast flying rumors of a "break" in the New York delegation in consequence, Mr. Barnes says: "But streets and hotels were crowded with enthusiastic friends of Seward and even his opponents did not appear to believe that he could be defeated."<sup>2</sup> Seward's latest biographer declares that "excepting the applause received from residents of Chicago all the other candidates together had not popular support enough to equal the enthusiasm of the "irrepressibles."<sup>3</sup>

On Thursday the second day when the platform was adopted and the Seward men were confident and sought to secure a ballot before adjournment Mr. Halstead reported that "the cheering of the spectators during the day indicated that a very large share of the outside pressure was for Seward. There is something irresistible in the prestige of his name."<sup>4</sup> And even on the third day when the crisis was culminating and all knew that the nominee was to be Lincoln or Seward, notwithstanding Lincoln's managers had shrewdly crowded the Wigwam with their shouters while Seward's phalanxes were parading the streets, the same authority, describing the scene following the mention of Seward's name says, "Above, all around the galleries, hats and handkerchiefs were flying in the tempest together. The wonder of the thing was that Seward outside pressure should, so far from New York be so powerful."<sup>5</sup> One of Lincoln's chief field managers, Leonard Swett, says that Seward's nomination in the Wigwam "was greeted with a deafening shout which, I confess, appalled us a little."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *New York Times*, May 15: Some may suspect this assertion because of the known prejudice of the management of *The Times* for Mr. Seward. Mr. Henry J. Raymond being Weed's first or second lieutenant at Chicago, but the impartiality of subsequent dispatches disarms such doubt.  
<sup>2</sup> Barnes' *Weed*, Vol. II, p. 269. <sup>3</sup> Bancroft's *Seward*, Vol. II, pp. 531-532.

<sup>4</sup> Halstead, p. 140. <sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, 145. Colonel McClure, who took part in the Convention scenes, seems to contradict Mr. Halstead in his *Our Presidents*, etc. (1900); he says: "As the ballots were announced, every vote for Lincoln was cheered to the echo while there were but few cheers for Seward except from the delegates themselves," p. 158. The two accounts are not reconcilable. <sup>6</sup> Oldroyd, p. 72.



If we are not seriously in error the glamour surrounding the memory of President Lincoln has produced a notable confusion in the explanations of his astonishing success at Chicago. Logicians define it as reasoning *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Mr. Seward's nomination was expected; Mr. Lincoln's was not. Crowds were conspicuous at the Convention; nothing like their numbers or performances had ever before been witnessed. Popular feeling, excitement and uproar were phenomenal. But as one chronicler puts it, it was the unexpected that happened. When the clans and tribes assembled, keen-eyed chiefs soon perceived that the real contest lay between the candidates of Illinois and New York. The opponents of Seward in the doubtful States months previously had realized the necessity for his defeat. The chiefs of the clans had no sooner assembled than they discovered that Lincoln was the only man on whom all could concentrate. Later the crowds hailing from the States whence the leaders came began to respond to the appeals of their chiefs. Then the ground-swells of partisan enthusiasm began to run heavily in Lincoln's favor. By the time the balloting began the surge and the roar of the anti-Seward sentiment became portentous terrific, overwhelming. The result, however, was not *ergo propter hoc*. There was, of course, much of local fondness for Abraham Lincoln, there was perhaps somewhat (but little) of "the West versus the East." Engulfing and overmastering all was a Cause, its success and the Nation's safety.

Crowds and mobs, now and then, do exert a potent influence upon the decisions of deliberative bodies. But we utterly misconceive the nature of the result at Chicago if we conclude that the shouting throngs determined the votes of the delegates. The outcome was not the ordering of the clans and tribes clanging their spears and shields, but the decision of their chiefs in council. It was a battle of captains and not a plebiscite of the militia's rank and file. The clans and the ranks listened to the pleadings and protests of Greeley and Field of New York, of Curtin and McClure of Pennsylvania, of Welles of Connecticut and the Blairs of Maryland and Missouri, of Lane and DeFrees of Indiana, of Davis, Judd and Swett of Illinois, of Kirkwood and Saunders, Nourse and Wil-

son of Iowa, and their favor turned. Convinced soon that the champion of their choice could not triumph such chiefs and captains as Mr. John A. Kasson and Judge Reuben Noble, Mr. John W. Rankin and Mr. Wm. P. Hepburn, Mr. Coker F. Clarkson and Mr. William B. Allison concurred.

Their concert was not the prejudice of the crowd nor the changeable opinion of a mob. It was the conviction of men trained in the tactics and strategy of party strife—of men who knew that the People's Cause was not to be won merely by the recognition of a theory or the exaltation of a favorite champion, of men who knew that the imperative condition of success was the conquest of stubborn adverse conditions. They were not idealists or prophets simply, but practical politicians. They knew that victory perches upon the banners of the best organized and best led battalions. Sanguine anticipations and zeal are needed but are not enough. A study of maps and regions in dispute, a specific knowledge of the battle-fields and a certain commissariat are also prerequisites.

Politicians in their hysterics and rhapsodies following success are wont to regard victory as *vox populi*. Thus Leonard Swett exclaimed a few days following the convention: "The nomination is from the people and not the politicians. No pledges have been made, no mortgages executed, but Lincoln enters the field a free man."<sup>1</sup> Enough has been exhibited to make one skeptical of his assertion. If ever politicians controlled, or rather directed, a convention, if ever leaders courageously resisted the emotional and erratic impulses of the mob or if you please "the people" the Chicago Convention was a case in point. We know now that Abraham Lincoln was of all the leaders in view the best that could have been chosen to guide our ship of State through the storms about to break. So much so that all will incline to agree with Admiral Chadwick that if an All-Wise Providence directs the destiny of these United States His favor was manifest indeed on May 18, 1860.<sup>2</sup> But the decision was not the voice of the people that spoke but the judgment of patriotic politicians who saw or felt the steady ingathering of black and fearful

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<sup>1</sup> Oldroyd, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Chadwick, *Causes of the Civil War*, p. 123.

forces whose terrific momentum was to wrench the very foundations of the Deep itself. In choosing their pilot some of the methods of politicians were exemplified. Abraham Lincoln sought the nomination but he wished it without lien or prejudice. But the prize was not so awarded. Leonard Swett either did not know or he forgot about the negotiations of Lincoln's field officer, Judge David Davis, with Indiana and Pennsylvania, whereby Caleb Smith and Simon Cameron were assured of position in the Cabinet if the Rail-Splitter was nominated and victory perched on the party standards on the Ides of November following. If he was not privy to them his Shade must have suffered distress on reading the revelations of Lamon and Herndon.<sup>1</sup>

### III.

#### WERE IOWA'S DELEGATES ON THE TRADE?

Addressing the Republican State Convention of Iowa at Des Moines in 1904 Senator William B. Allison said that of all the events in his long career as a public servant he was most proud of the fact that as a young man he enjoyed the confidence of his fellow republicans to such a degree that he was selected as one of Iowa's delegates to the convention that first put Abraham Lincoln in nomination for the Presidency.

Fame in the last analysis is chiefly the historian's favorable verdict. The patriot's ambition is the hope that he may serve his country in great affairs and be thought well of by his compeers and his successors. But it seems to be the fate of the patriot or statesman to suffer much from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. In the clash of political strife he expects and endures with what patience he may bold aspersions or gross hints adverse to his honor. He knows that good men suffer because evil men work, flourish and escape. When, however, the storm and stress are over and passion is still he does not expect their reiteration in cool blood and unless amply justified he resents it. Obviously the greater

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<sup>1</sup> Lamon. *Life of Lincoln*, pp.449-450, 457-461—Herndon, *Ib.*, p. 181.



a man's eminence and the finer his type of character the more sensitive he is to charges or suggestions implying reprehensible conduct or petty behavior in matters of great concern. Irritation is not lessened when a reflection comes via a partial statement that discreetly hits no one in particular but in general each and all thereby involved. It mitigates the smart but little when it appears in the sober narrative of an erudite and distinguished historian, buttressed by the awesome authority of quotation marks. The greater the headway the greater is the leeway to twist a quip of Oliver Wendell Holmes. The situation is enhanced of course if perchance it turns out that no facts justify the allegation or give it even the color of justification. Resentment then becomes indignation.

In a biography of Salmon P. Chase, written by Dr. Albert Bushnell Hart, professor of American History in Harvard University, a few years since for the well-known series of "American Statesmen," appears the following paragraph:

As the time for the Convention approached, Chase found a few friends and staunch delegates from other States; but he got glimpses also of a stratum of intrigue into which he could not descend. The Spragues were said to have bought the Rhode Island State election for \$100,000, and some of the Rhode Island delegates were "purchaseable;" *some delegates from Iowa were on the "trading tack,"* and in Indiana there was "a floating and marketable vote." A Philadelphia editor wrote to him with unblushing frankness that he had worked for Cameron but that "if any little subcontract could be given us which would enable us to realize a little profit, we would endeavor to serve Ohio to the full extent of our ability." But neither Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Iowa nor Indiana gave any votes for Chase at Chicago. (pp. 189-190. Italics here.)

One receives two decided impressions on reading the foregoing. First, there was an astounding amount of corruption prevalent in the preliminaries, if not in the proceedings, of the Republican National Convention of 1860. Second, the character or conduct of Iowa's delegates was smirched with the same pitch that soiled the delegates from other States. All of which, in the classic phrase of Horace Greeley, is "mighty interesting, if true."

The paragraph, however, is a sort of omnibus of damnable citations and sinister suggestions. As is usual with the

contents of such vehicles the assortment cannot with ease be precisely defined or interpreted for the reason that the statements are somewhat ill-conditioned and indefinite in their suggestiveness. A sharp scrutiny of the paragraph leaves one in some perplexity. It is not quite clear whether transactions prior to the assembly of the National Convention are referred to only or the proceedings during the Convention week are included. It is immaterial for the terms offered Chase by the thrifty patriots clearly contemplated specific performance in the Convention and thereafter delivery of the benefits or goods bargained for, whether cash, contracts, or patronage. There is perhaps a distinction but certainly not a difference between a delegate who impudently insists upon a *quid pro quo* in the form of an office before supporting a candidate or measure and a man who openly resorts to bargain and sale for cash on delivery. The unlikeness is scarcely important, it being merely a sugar-coating or veneer disguising a disagreeable thing.

Although reprehensible conduct is plumply asserted none of the statements it is instructive to note are direct or positive so that an explicit charge is posited or particular individuals are pinioned or pilloried. The Spragues "were said." What Spragues! The family into which Miss Kate Chase married! "Some" of Rhode Island's delegates; "some of Iowa's delegates were on the trading tack;" and Indiana had "a floating and marketable vote." Does the latter relate to the electors or to the delegates? Was the trading of the Iowans with a view to cash, contracts or offices?

Stated ordinarily in common political discussion the reference to Iowa would be taken to mean but little else than the prosaic practice of making combinations or "deals" in the final clinch of a convention. But the context with its serious accusations or assertions of gross misconduct makes the casual reader and the student alike conclude that Iowa's delegates were guilty of crass venality.

No one needs to be told that in nearly every case Professor Hart in effect flatly charges conduct that smacks of criminality. No effective corrupt practice act would tolerate such proceedings. Disgrace and ouster, if not fine and imprison-

ment, would promptly ensue, upon the submission of proofs. Disagreeable truth must now and then be told. If this is or may be necessary the particular persons chargeable with offensive conduct should be explicitly referred to.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise associates free from blame are equally involved, being besmudged or damned by implication. "Professor Hart should not make the charge against the honor of our State," says one of the delegates yet living who enjoys international fame in Diplomacy, Letters and Politics, "without producing some proof of its own verity. Indeed, his charge is made in the lowest terms. 'Some delegates from Iowa were on the trading tack.' Such indefinite charges it is difficult to answer."<sup>2</sup>

Who were the traders? The delegates who voted for Chase, e. g., Judge Wm. Smyth of Marion, and Mr. William B. Allison of Dubuque? Or the delegates who did not and would not vote for Chase, e. g., Mr. Wm. Penn Clarke, of Iowa City, or Col. Alvin Saunders of Mt. Pleasant, Mr. Jas. F. Wilson of Fairfield, or Mr. Henry O'Connor of Muscatine, Mr. Wm. P. Hepburn of Marshalltown, or the Rev. H. P. Scholte of Pella, Mr. Coker F. Clarkson of Metropolis or Lieut. Gov. Nicholas Rusch of Davenport, or Messrs. C. C. Nourse and John A. Kasson of Des Moines? Such inquiries are not idle or irrelevant but intrusive and inevitable; both on the part of the delegates living and the relatives and friends of the dead, and on the part of associates and citizens interested in the good name of the commonwealth; for as we shall see later few States sent delegations to the Chicago Convention having greater caliber and character than was found among the official representatives of the Hawkeyes.

Professor Hart enjoys great fame as a historian. He is at once an indefatigable student and narrator and a leading au-

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<sup>1</sup> If Professor Hart cares to examine an instructive illustration of the sort of direct and explicit charge that justice requires if wrongdoing is to be asserted, he will find it in the pages of Mr. Charles E. Hamlin's *Life and Times of Hannibal Hamlin*, where in the latter's defeat in the Baltimore convention in 1864 and the nomination of Andrew Johnson for the Vice-Presidency is specifically charged to the "unscrupulous action" of the then Governor of Iowa—the charge being accompanied by exhibits of very damaging evidence that seem to substantiate the accusation. (See pp. 477-479.)

<sup>2</sup> Mr. John A. Kasson, to the writer. Letter dated Nahant, Mass., August 28, 1906.

thority in historical criticism and scientific procedure. He is therefore entitled to the presumption that he means what he says or he does not; that he must have examined the official list of Iowa's delegates and realized that many of them afterwards acquired celebrity in our national history or he did not; that he must have carefully sifted the evidence for his statement or he did not. In all cases either alternative entitles us to call for specific references and proof, so that the innocent shall not suffer with the guilty or to insist upon retraction or modification, if his animadversion is unsupported.

The offense against good men is not lessened in these premises but increased by the fact that Professor Hart utilized and apparently wholly depended upon Salmon P. Chase's private correspondence. An eminent public man like Chase is daily in receipt of letters from scores of friends, admirers or strangers, freely relating their views of men and measures. Such epistolary declarations are usually colored greatly by the prejudice of the writer's personal or partizan friendships or desires; and are often heedless or reckless. As they are not intended for the public eye the indiscriminate statements matter but little as the recipient is seldom so heedless or reckless as to give them publicity. We certainly may presume that Chase did not give much currency to the revelations of his various correspondents. Certainly he did not expose them to the hurt of official and party contemporaries whom he held in great esteem or respect; and he no more would have desired to have any use made thereof even after his death during the lives of his associates. Messrs. James F. Wilson, John A. Kasson and William B. Allison were the official and party associates of Chase between 1861 and his death in 1873 and each one of them enjoyed national fame for ability and high character. And the two last mentioned were living in 1899 when the biography in question was published and they are still living! Something of a very serious character exhibiting elaborate or enormous iniquity affecting adversely either the public welfare or actually thwarting Chase's ambition as regards the nomination at Chicago alone can justify the exposure of that correspondence in such wise as needlessly to

besmudge the good names of honorable delegates yet living in Indiana and Iowa, and perhaps Rhode Island.

Inquiry develops the fact that the whole basis for the statement affecting Iowa is the following letter!<sup>1</sup> Its contents are given entire. Their use or misuse in the foregoing is the only justification for their exhibition here. Only the initials of the subscriber are given although as will be apparent, there is really no particular reason for withholding his name:

Gate City Office, Keokuk, Feby. 24, '60.

Hon. S. P. Chase,

Dear Sir: Some time since I had your views on the Tariff published in the *Gate City*, and I have just republished the New Orleans Bulletin's notice of your election to the Senate.

I was at our State Convention, but I found the delegates, who were all aspiring politicians, very wary, & it was difficult to sound them, though I judged you had about as many friends as anybody.

We have just received *The Tribune* of the 20th, which comes out for Bates. We were not unprepared for such a move, & yet it rather strikes us with surprise. Our impression now is that it will not damage you or Seward in this State.

The Chicago delegates from this (Lee) county are Senator Rankin, of this place, & Dr. Walker of Ft. Madison,—both, no doubt, in favor of Cameron first & both of them rather on the trading tack.

I am sorry to say that, as a politician & with leading politicians of the State, our friend Ex-Governor Lowe has little influence.

Will you do me the favor to send, if convenient, a copy of your first inaugural—or the one which contained your argument on the Single District System.

Mr. Denison and family are well; Mrs. R. is not very well, but joins me in kind regards.

Respectfully,

W.— R.—

P. S. At present, I have no pecuniary interest in the *Gate City* Office. But as the Editor-in-Chief, Mr. Howell, broke his leg last November, & is still on his back, and his partner, Mr. Briggs, was gone to Washington to fill some place obtained for him by our Col. Curtis,—I am left here in full charge for present, but am not certain as to my future.

W. R.<sup>2</sup>

As a base for a serious reflection upon a body of delegates we are greatly mistaken if most persons will not regard the foregoing letter as utterly inadequate. It is a basis so narrow and thin that few persons even in the heat of bitter partizan debate would venture to make use of it adverse to any one. From beginning to end there is nothing whatever in it either directly or by fair inference warranting Professor Hart's use of the letter in the connection exhibited above. It relieves

<sup>1</sup> Professor Hart to writer, Aug. 29, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> From Papers of Salmon P. Chase in the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.



the two delegates actually mentioned, as well as all of the others from adverse criticism or judgment. The letter, together with a communication of a contemporary of W. R. yet living, gives us the following facts:

W. R. was a personal friend or old-time acquaintance of Salmon P. Chase. He came to Keokuk in 1854 and until 1861 was business manager of *The Gate City*. He admired Chase much, became a watcher and worker in behalf of the Ohioan's candidacy for the presidential nomination and promoted his interests so far as feasible. He attended as a delegate the Republican State Convention that met at Des Moines January 18, 1860, to select delegates to the Chicago Convention. He evidently found the delegates—it is not clear whether he refers to delegates to the State or to those to the national convention—chary of expression and wary of questions as to their preferences or probable course in regard to the national convention. He found, however, or felt, that Chase enjoyed about equal favor with the other candidates mentioned. Horace Greeley's advocacy of Edw. Bates he did not seem to regard very seriously, yet he confesses some surprise. Finally, he found the delegates to Chicago selected from his own district and county to be both favorably disposed towards Cameron of Pennsylvania but both of them *rather* on the trading tack. The next year (1861) W. R., it is interesting and instructive to note, secured a position in the Treasury Department at Washington under Secretary Chase, wherein he continued many years until his death a decade ago; an appointment that was very appropriate, too, for my informant says that his "mind was completely wrapped up in finances and he wrote almost entirely on that subject" while in Keokuk.<sup>1</sup>

The exact language of W. R. has not been quoted by Professor Hart and it is highly significant. Evidently W. R. had pressed Senator Rankin and Dr. Walker for an expression of their preferences and probable course without much success for he concludes that "no doubt" they were for Cameron, that is, they had not told him so explicitly, but he, W. R. had inferred so; and further from their manner and perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Mr. J. W. Delaplaine of Keokuk to the writer, Jan. 22, 1907.

bits of conversation he suspected that they were “rather” on the trading tack. He does not so much as intimate that they had broached or hinted at a trade or mercenary transaction. What W. R. refers to he *does not assert as a fact—he merely intimates a surmise* of his whereas Professor Hart omits the “rather” and absolutely asserts that “some of Iowa’s delegates *were on the ‘trading tack,’*” his assertion being a bold presumption wholly his own, with no substantial proof offered therefor.

In fine, Professor Hart apparently is clearly subject to criticism on several counts. First, he misuses Chase’s correspondence while official colleagues and party associates are yet alive. Second, he has by a partial statement imputed reprehensible conduct to thirty-two prominent citizens of Iowa when only two, if any, were by any manner of means derelict. Third, he does gross injustice to the two delegates in question for he asserts as a fact what the authority on whom he depends, does not so assert and intimates nothing that gives even color to such a charge of misconduct. Fourth, by an important omission of a qualifying word he perverts the sense of W. R.’s statement and thus seriously misrepresents the authority he relies upon. Fifth, Professor Hart’s language in the last sentence of the paragraph quoted above indicates that he did not scrutinize the tally sheets of the Convention very carefully.

Professor Hart says that “neither Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Iowa nor Indiana gave any votes to Chase at Chicago.” The statement is correct as to Pennsylvania and Indiana, but it is grossly in error as to Rhode Island and impliedly so as to Iowa. On the first ballot Rhode Island gave Chase one vote, on the second three votes, and on the third one vote. Iowa gave Chase one of her eight votes on the first ballot and one-half a vote on the second and third ballots.<sup>1</sup> The vote of Iowa represented four Chase delegates on the first and two delegates on each of the other ballots. If Professor Hart means to be taken literally, Iowa, of course, gave Chase no “votes” because she cast but one for him, but Rhode Island certainly gave him votes.

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, pp. 149, 152, 153.

Responding to the writer's inquiry as to the meaning of his statement and the authority therefor, Professor Hart in closing his letter says: "I did not suppose when I quoted the phrase that any one would take it to mean that the delegates were trading for money. They were probably trying to get some assurance as to cabinet appointments, a vice presidential candidate, or something of that kind." Professor Hart's disclaimer of harmful purpose in quoting W. R.'s harmless phrase must be accepted as complete and final. But the explanation, while it relieves the situation somewhat, does not restore the *status quo*. It does not abolish the paragraph with its positive declaration, with its ugly implication. There are few libraries in the country that lack the classic volumes of "American Statesmen," the series in which Professor Hart's Life of Chase appears. Thousands have read and thousands will yet read that, when patriots were called upon to make the "most fate-pregnant decision" a national convention ever had to make, Iowa's notables were mere hucksters and petty traders and they will conclude that they were worse.

In view of the exhibit and analysis of the evidence for the adverse charge under consideration a defense of the character or conduct of Senator J. W. Rankin of Keokuk, or of Dr. J. C. Walker, the former a delegate-at-large, and the latter a district delegate is superfluous. Senator Rankin was the law partner of Samuel F. Miller, whose elevation to the Supreme Bench has already been referred to. Tradition has it that he was Keokuk's most brilliant lawyer in the days when the Gate City shone with such brilliants. Dr. Walker we shall see was a man who enjoyed the confidence of his fellow townsmen and was held in high esteem. Characterizing them in a personal interview with the writer, Hon. Charles C. Nourse, now as in 1860 of Des Moines, one of the leaders of Iowa's Lincoln forces before and during the Convention says of his associates: "Dr. Walker and Senator Rankin were both men of great ability and solid character with a fine sense of honor in public matters. Neither pettiness nor desire for private gain were moving motives with either."<sup>1</sup> Whatever Dr.

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Hon. Charles C. Nourse. Ib.



Walker's preference may have been in February, in May and at Chicago his voice and votes were from first to last for Abraham Lincoln.<sup>1</sup> Senator Rankin, on the other hand, was a firm advocate of the nomination of Simon Cameron. One of Keokuk's noted lawyers labored for several days prior to the Convention to persuade him to vote for Lincoln but without effect.<sup>2</sup> At Chicago, however, Senator Rankin turned to Illinois' candidate as soon as he realized that Cameron's chances were nil.

Taking the phrase "trading tack" in a large and honorable sense, and a common sense, and it is not improbable that the two delegates mentioned did have certain ambitious plans in contemplation for securing vice presidential honors for Iowa. As will be shown in a subsequent section, there are reasons for thinking that friends of James Harlan, Iowa's distinguished senior senator at that time, were not unmindful of a political situation that contained many chances in favor of such a consummation. The matter was broached both privately and publicly and may have been in the minds of Senator Rankin and Dr. Walker.

#### IV.

##### MEN AND METHODS IN CONVENTION..

A political convention in a Democracy like ours is of necessity a fortuitous concourse. No one ordinarily expects to find such an assembly composed only of philosophers and scientists, saints and statesmen. On the other hand such conclaves are seldom made up of shysters, knaves or fools. For the reason, in both cases doubtless, that neither would be tolerated by the general public. If the area of interests involved is extended or the issues at stake vital and momentous, the confluence of forces at the common center, no matter how quietly they may originate or serenely they may flow in, must produce commotion. If the currents thus concenter with great momentum a convention in the nature of the case concludes in a maelstrom. To the unemotional onlooker in lobby or gallery and especially to the scholastic who coolly studies

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. J. P. Cruikshank of Ft. Madison to the writer, April 26, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Henry Strong, now of Chicago, to the writer, June 4, 1907.

the records, the din and noise, the excitement, tempests and uproar seem utterly absurd and dangerous. Nevertheless they are not unnatural. Wisdom does not always predominate in their proceedings but no more does irrationality, or stupid perversity always prevail.

Two classes of persons compose our political conventions be they state or national. One class consists of those who care only for issues or principles. The other class is principally concerned with individuals or personalities—namely champions, or themselves. Such gatherings if they are to prove efficient must be composed of both classes in about equal proportions; since cranks and visionaries are as certain to run amuck and make success impossible, as petty heelers and sordid spoilsmen are to offend the law and the prophets.

Each class divides into two groups. The first class consists of the extremists who insist strenuously upon explicit and heroic measures, and declarations of doctrine regardless of contrary considerations of time or place, and of the moderates whose foremost interest is always the success of their cause but who realize that conditions determine success and should control practical measures—hence they support this or that champion of their principle believing that their cause will attain success more speedily by his promotion. Some of the latter type stand staunchly by their champion through thick and thin, hoping all things and doing all things in his behalf. Others deliberately canvass the situation, coolly calculate the chances of this or that representative candidate, and if they perceive that fortune does not favor their own preferences throw their influence in the direction that seems most likely to assure approximate success. Further, if their first estimate proves wrong they then change. The claims of friendship or admiration are not their chief concern; it is consideration for the success of their cause that dominates them. Iowa had some excellent illustrations of these types in the Convention at Chicago.

Judge Wm. Smyth cast votes for Chase at each ballot even when he must have seen that the Ohioan did not have a ghost of a show but he was staunch for a principle. Wm. Penn Clarke, Rev. H. P. Scholte and six or seven others stood firm

for Seward throughout the balloting notwithstanding the breaks in his columns in the New England States on the second and third ballots. The Lincoln men under the lead of Col. Alvin Saunders and Mr. C. C. Nourse, in spite of heavy odds, worked from the first for the candidate of Illinois. Mr. Coker F. Clarkson was a steadfast admirer of both Judge McLean and Governor Chase, having enjoyed personal and political associations with each in Ohio. In the Convention, however, he cast his vote on the first and second ballots for Judge McLean. On the third ballot he went to Lincoln.

The second general class instead of contemplating chiefly general principles and grand results is interested principally in personalities, either champions or themselves. They insist upon and care for correct principles and righteousness in a practical way, as do the former class, but they visualize them more in tangible leaders. This class probably comprises usually the larger numbers in conventions. This class too is easily discernible in two groups or kinds. One kind is made up of hero-worshippers, the major number perhaps. They feel and see the issues of right and wrong only through personalities. A leader who champions their cause they ardently admire. There is little or no analysis, no comparison, no synthesis of views or points of conduct. The champion's ability, his looks and manner, his prowess in debate, his successes, his steadfastness in the faith, his sacrifices for the cause enthrall the mind and energize heart and hand. They join his forces and work and proselyte in his behalf. Ardor and sentiment are likely to characterize their performances rather than cool calculation and reasoning, youth rather than age; and in the progress and culmination of a canvass they are wont to hear *vox dei* in the noise of the shouting throngs of the street and the amphitheatre. But enthusiasm and zeal if faults are exceedingly common—indeed, most normal persons regard them as commendable virtues. Few regard the character of those so delinquent as worthy of indictment on the score of sincerity or intelligence for the reason probably that it would include most of us. "I was," says Henry Villard, "enthusiastically for the nomination of Wm. H. Seward  
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The noisy demonstrations of his followers

and especially of the New York delegation in his favor made me sure, too, that his candidacy would be irresistible.”<sup>1</sup>

Most critical persons with a cynical turn of mind are wont to sneer much at this sort of thing. But it is not so irrational or illogical as may seem at first flush. Large numbers united and vocal for a candidate or cause indicate decided unanimity of opinion or general concurrence of interests or views. Such concurrence of numbers is presumptively the result of rational considerations and sensible conclusions. Most men are too busy to give particular attention or devote time to the study of conditions and causes, of the *pros* and *cons* of men and measures in issue. They turn to the men of “light and leading” to whom they have been accustomed to look and defer. They do not supinely follow their leadership but generally the consideration that decides them is the feeling that the numbers indicate a better or more informed judgment than their own.

The second sort who are interested in personalities rather than causes or principles is the group that think of their own individual welfare. They may be manifest in that aggravating species who seek to be on the winning side—they flit and flutter between the lines, anxious and uncertain lest they decide unwisely. This class is discouragingly numerous, not only in conventions but everywhere else. They mean well and usually are harmless in intent; they lack acute intelligence and steady nerve. They seek popularity and cannot endure the idea of defeat or nonsuccess. Another species comprises those who follow politics for a livelihood or as a profession. Not all or for that matter the major portion are petty and sordid in seeking their own interest. There are few men who do not covet public honors and promotion, and all must live. Affiliation with a party is the chief mode of advancement in politics. One ambitious for honors or anxious for a livelihood in politics must align himself with some faction, interest or issue. Otherwise such an one will be *vox clamantis in deserto*. Hope of immediate personal success may

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, 137. Mr. Villard later became the President and creator of the Northern Pacific Railroad. He also was a financial backer if not a decisive factor in the management of the two great journals of New York, *The Nation* and *The Evening Post*.

be and usually is coupled with the noblest aspirations for human welfare. Some thus animated, however, are willing, if need be, to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the cause, as witness Lincoln's deference to Trumbull and his insistence upon putting the Freeport Questions. Others permit the ardor of desire to blur the vision and impel disregard of the niceties of conduct as was the case with Ohio's noble Roman, Salmon P. Chase, in his later relations with his great rival and coadjutor.

There are, of course, in conventions, no small number who are narrow, petty and sordid in their calculations and strife for immediate benefit. They regard such a conclave as a sort of fair or market where hucksters gather for bargain and sale and higgling and haggling is the rule. Oftentimes, alas, the dickering is corrupt and utterly vicious. Shakespeare describes the conduct of this miserable fraternity in his lines depicting the species of human kind that

Dodge  
And palter in the shifts of baseness.

The latter class are an abomination and should be given short shrift. The former class exhibit a low order of political intelligence and virtue. They are simply petty and stupid but not necessarily shysters or scoundrels.

Academicians and arm-chair critics are wont to over-emphasize or misjudge the numbers and the significance of the huckstering or corrupt politicians in conventions. A few black sheep in a flock makes most persons reach hasty and sweeping conclusions whence one infers that the entire number is discolored. Taking the daily occurrence of horrible headlines in our sensational press they talk as if crime and divorce were universal and rampant. Pettiness, sordidness and corruption are found in politics and conventions and perhaps are more impudent and obtrusive but they are discoverable and prevalent in all other walks of life in similar measure. Again it is not easy to differentiate the bad or undesirable from the necessary. Petty trading in offices is not particularly laudable. Yet combinations or "deals" in the large, adjustments of forces and compromises of conflicting interests are imperative if a convention is to avoid futile con-



troversy that easily invokes serious estrangements or concludes in disruption.

Among the men from Iowa in the Convention of 1860, were a number who possessed rare powers of discernment and achievement. They were masters in political tactics and strategy; men who shortly thereafter attained great eminence in public life and just fame. They severally had their preferences but the triumph of anti-slavery principles and success of the party at the polls were the predominant considerations with them. Mr. John A. Kasson preferred Edward Bates of Missouri and Mr. Wm. B. Allison's choice was Salmon P. Chase; but after they realized the futility of their hopes both threw their votes and influence in favor of Lincoln. Col. Alvin Saunders at heart would have rejoiced if Seward could have been made the candidate but an extended correspondence prior to going to Chicago with leaders in Illinois, Indiana and Pennsylvania convinced him that the nomination of the New Yorker put success in jeopardy. Consequently notwithstanding his attachment to Senator Harlan, who earnestly desired Seward's selection, Colonel Saunders went to Chicago and did yeomen service for the Illinoisan. Governor Kirkwood, at bottom prejudiced in favor of Chase because of early associations as Democrats in Ohio, frankly wrote Iowa's senior Senator that if long and able service were decisive Mr. Seward was entitled to the nomination, especially because he had long been the "best abused man" in the party. Nevertheless he concluded that other matters had the right of way. Saunders and Kirkwood were perhaps Iowa's leaders in promoting Lincoln's candidacy: One or the other probably taking part in the "Committee of Twelve" whose decision doubtless exercised a potent if not decisive influence upon the final result.

A fact of the greatest significance in the conduct of all the Iowans in the Convention was their staunch stand and sturdy fight in the presence of overwhelming odds. Two of the Chase delegates, all of the Seward delegates stood fast throughout the three ballots. All of the others apparently decided to go to Lincoln, when his chances were not favorable, when Horace Greeley had telegraphed *The Tribune* that the opposition to



Seward could not unite and conceded the latter's nomination. If Iowa's contingent had been petty traders and hucksters, or politicians of the weather-vane sort, they certainly would not have aligned themselves with the "Rail-Splitter" and his uncertain prospects. They would have joined the supporters of Seward the "popular" man, the man whose forces were led by the wizard Weed, the man for whom Col. A. K. McClure says "two-thirds" of the delegates really wanted to vote.

V.

CONDITIONS ATHWART THE PLANS OF WEED, GREELEY, AND THE  
BLAIRS.

If one inquires of Iowans who were contemporary observers of political events in 1860 as to the state of the public mind respecting the nomination of Abraham Lincoln, he receives various answers. One of Des Moines' leading citizens who was an influential Democrat in the capital city in 1860, declared orally to the writer: "Everybody 'round here was for Mr. Lincoln." "Before the Convention?" "That's my recollection." Professor Jesse Macy, of Iowa College at Grinnell, writes: "Lincoln before the Convention was unknown or he made little impression. . . . Lincoln struck us as a surprise." An attendant on the Convention, Mr. J. H. Merrill, of Ottumwa, says that many from Iowa were present at Chicago during the Convention week and they were "almost without exception in favor of Seward." Dr. William Salter of Burlington, whose intimate associations with the State's dominant men were exceptional and his interest in anti-slavery propaganda alert and active, states, "Both parties are in the fog now [February, 1907] as to who will get the nomination for the next presidential election; it was just so in 1859-60. Things were very much mixed and confused."<sup>1</sup> Doctor Salter but re-echoes the editorial expression of a keen observer in those days, Mr. Charles Aldrich, in *The Hamilton Freeman*, April 21, 1860: "It is proverbially the darkest just before day. . . . The great Conventions of the three parties are on the point of assembling and yet at no time during the past twelve months have the indications of their actions been more confused and indistinct. And it is

<sup>1</sup> Citations above, except first, from letters to the writer.

plain that the wise heads at Washington are fully as much in the dark about the prospects as the people in Aroostook.”

Mr. Aldrich’s observations were not only aptly put but accurate. In August, 1859, Congressman James M. Ashley, of Toledo, traveled in various States to ascertain the chances of Gov. Salmon P. Chase for securing the nomination, and he informed Charles A. Dana, then associate editor of *The New York Tribune*, that “the Northwest is quite as much for Chase as for Seward,” but Dana wrote to J. S. Pike that he had “the best information to the contrary, particularly from Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and Indiana, where the Germans who hold the balance of power, are hot Seward men.”<sup>1</sup> *The New York Herald*, on March 7, 1860, in forecasting the result at Chicago gave Iowa’s entire vote to Cameron, and on May 16th its columns contained two dispatches from Chicago, one dated May 11th, asserting that “Minnesota and Iowa are for Seward,” and the other, May 15th, declaring that a majority of the delegates of Iowa would go to Lincoln. In Greeley’s *Tribune*, May 15th, the day preceding the Convention, its Chicago advices were “Iowa is discordant and uncertain.”

When Iowa was called on the first ballot for the nomination for President, Friday morning, May 18, 1860, the immense throng in the Wigwam was in a state of intense expectancy. William H. Seward, contrary to expectation, had received only 147½ votes, and Abraham Lincoln 100 votes, more than twice the number received by any of his competitors. The votes of the Hawkeyes, though few, were important, as their state was known to be within the sphere of doubtful territory, possession of which was essential to the party’s success in the ensuing election. Mr. Wm. Penn Clarke, a lawyer and leader, of Iowa City, whose fame exceeded the borders of the State, arose as chairman to announce the vote of the delegation. He essayed to speak, but not a word was forthcoming. His effort was obvious but vain. The delegation sat by in astonishment and general wonderment began to be manifest. It was soon realized that Mr. Clarke was suffering from an impediment in his speech that was serious only when he was laboring under great excitement. Perceiving that utterance would be futile

<sup>1</sup> Pike’s *First Blows of the Civil War*, p. 443.

or painful, a delegate came to his relief and announced that Iowa gave one vote each to Edward Bates of Missouri, Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, Salmon P. Chase and John McLean, both of Ohio, two votes to Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, and two votes to William H. Seward, of New York.<sup>1</sup> Each of Iowa's votes represented the concurrent preferences of four delegates, as her delegation numbered thirty-two.

This division of her vote among six candidates was noteworthy. No other northern or free State parcelled out its vote so variously as did Iowa. Connecticut, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island gave their votes to four candidates on the first roll call; all other States to three candidates or less. In three of the States mentioned the chances of victory for the Republicans in the Fall campaign were far from certain. It is interesting to note, and significant withal, that one southern or slave State, Kentucky, on the same ballot, gave her thirty-three votes to six candidates, favoring four that Iowa did, but voting for Wade and Sumner instead of Bates and Cameron. On the second ballot, Iowa gave her vote to four candidates, Chase, Lincoln, McLean and Seward; and on the third and decisive ballot, the delegation was still divided—Chase received  $\frac{1}{2}$  vote, Lincoln  $5\frac{1}{2}$ , and Seward 2 votes.

Such marked and persistent division among Iowa's men must have reflected not only lack of harmony, due to stubborn personal preferences of the delegates, but sharp factional dissensions in the party's ranks in Iowa. Or that distribution of votes may be looked upon as evidence of the tactics of trading politicians, maneuvering for position so as to insure favor from the successful champion. However Iowa's action may be considered, we cannot realize its significance until we appreciate the people and the politics of the State whence the delegation hailed; for, even if trading was their primary concern, politicians seldom act in such a wise as to run seriously athwart the inclinations of their constituents, since Success is the deity they are wont to worship. This fact is usually overlooked by academic historians as well as by ordinary lay chroniclers.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Mr. Charles C. Nourse.

Antecedent conditions as well as causes control results in politics; factions no less than factors; popular prejudices as much as persons. The action of Iowa's delegation at Chicago was an issue of the character, traditions and local interests of the people they represented. Iowa had been a State but fourteen years. Her corporate existence did not span a quarter of a century. Her population, consequently, was made up of pioneers. Public opinion among them consisted largely of the keen predilections or prejudices of their ancestral stocks, modified somewhat by the conditions of life in a frontier State. This complex of local prejudices and interests, together with the composition and strength of the political parties, must be understood if we are to appreciate correctly Iowa's action at Chicago. As neither the facts nor their significance has ever been directly pointed out, the conditions and various phases of the politics of Iowa in the formative days of the Republican party, prior to the pre-convention campaign of 1860, will be exhibited with considerable detail.

1. *Abolitionists Aggressive but not Dominant.*

The stand taken by Iowa, or rather by many of her men of "light and leading," against the aggressions of the Slavocrats between 1850 and 1860 has created the notion that abolitionism generally prevailed throughout the State. This belief is manifest in Major S. H. M. Byers' stirring account, *John Brown in Iowa*.<sup>1</sup> "His career during those Kansas days," we are told, "was watched in Iowa as no other State. . . . Iowa afforded him his first refuge place after contest. . . . It was across her prairies and past her loyal towns he wandered by day and by night carrying liberty for the oppressed. . . . He was so often and so closely connected with the State that people almost forgot that he was not an Iowa man."<sup>2</sup> Von Holst seems to give warrant for such an opinion when he says of the elections of 1854: "Iowa hitherto a veritable hot-bed of dough-faces now reinforced the little band of 'abolitionists' in the Senate by Harlan."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Byers' *Iowa in War Times*, ch. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> *History*, Vol. V, p. 78.

Sundry facts give color and substance to such a belief. Foremost, perhaps, has been the prominent roles played by New Englanders and New Yorkers in the development of the State. In politics there have been few more important factors than Fitz Henry Warren, James W. Grimes, John A. Kasson, Josiah B. Grinnell, Nathaniel B. Baker, Judges Asahel W. and Nathaniel M. Hubbard, John H. Gear, William Larrabee and Horace Boies. In the courts Charles Mason, Stephen Whicher and Francis Springer, Austin Adams and John F. Dillon, stand out. In railway construction Grenville M. Dodge and Peter A. Dey are pre-eminent. In journalism Charles Aldrich, Coker F. Clarkson, Clark Dunham, A. B. F. Hildreth, Frank W. Palmer, and Jacob Rich have been conspicuous; and in education and religious life Father Asa Turner and the "Iowa Band," George F. Magoun, Samuel A. Howe, Josiah L. Pickard, A. S. Welch and Henry Sabin loom up. Not all who came out of Yankeedom were abolitionists by any means, but abolitionism flourished most vigorously in New England and in the other States westward, peopled largely by her emigrant citizens. Furthermore, if not abolitionists in the strict sense of the term, they were almost certain to be stout opponents of the extension of slavery northward beyond the bounds set by the Ordinance of 1787 and the Compromise of 1820.

In the first decision rendered in 1839 by the territorial supreme court of Iowa, Chief Justice Charles Mason, speaking for the court, declared that the great Ordinance and the Compromise worked a forfeiture of rights *in rem* in human kind within the State of Iowa—and squarely announced that "when the slave owner illegally restrains a human being of his liberty, it is proper that the laws . . . should exert their remedial interposition."<sup>1</sup> The Court realized the vital import of their holding—especially as they observe that its consideration was "not strictly regular"—but as the case involved "an important question which may ere long, if unsettled, become an exciting one," they so decreed. In 1859 Judge Taney reversed Judge Mason in the case of *Dred Scott*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Iowa Reports*, Vol. I, pp. 6-10.



There were soon numerous underground railway routes through Iowa—main lines, branches and spurs. Southern officers and slave catchers found their rights under the Fugitive Slave Law nullified by Iowa's "law breakers." Governor Grimes himself wrote Mrs. Grimes concerning the first case in Burlington, namely the seizure and trial of the slave "Dick," June 23, 1855: "I am sorry I am Governor of the State, for, although I can and shall prevent the State authorities and officers from interfering in aid of the Marshal, yet if not in office, I am inclined to think I should be a law breaker. . . . Judge [later Governor] Lowe was brought from Keokuk Monday in the night, and a writ of *habeas corpus* was ready to be served if the decision went against us."<sup>1</sup> Fitz Henry Warren exhibited a willingness to take the law into his own hands in that affair.<sup>2</sup> The exaltation of such leaders as Grimes and Harlan, the practical support of John Brown and his men,<sup>3</sup> Governor Kirkwood's ringing message on the Barclay Coppoc affair, the extraordinary enlistments of Iowa's sons in the Union army—all these facts seem to indicate that abolitionism was rampant in Iowa in those troublesome times.

The careers of some of Iowa's delegates to Chicago in 1860 confirm the notion that abolitionism was prevalent. The chairman of the delegation—Mr. William Penn Clarke—early acquired fame or infamy as a "nigger worshipper."<sup>4</sup> In 1850 he received 575 votes from the Abolitionists for Governor. He was a conductor on the Underground Railway. During the warfare in Kansas he openly and effectively assisted Eli Thayer and Col. T. W. Higginson in transporting "Liberty" men and Sharpe's rifles to Tabor to protect the

<sup>1</sup> Salter's *Grimes*, pp. 72-73.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, p. 73. Mr. George Frazee, Commissioner of the Court to hear the case, practically asserts that both Governor Grimes and Colonel Warren were "principal movers" in gathering "the crowd of sympathizers with the unfortunate fugitive." The abolitionist who was aiding "Dick" to escape was a New Englander, the celebrated botanist and historian of the Long Expedition, Dr. Edwin James, then living a few miles west of Burlington. See Frazee's article, "The Iowa Fugitive Slave Case," *Annals*, Vol. IV, 118-137.

<sup>3</sup> Brown's company for Harper's Ferry was organized and drilled at Springdale, Iowa. Iowa furnished more men than any other State. See Gue's *History of Iowa*, Vol. II, p. 2.

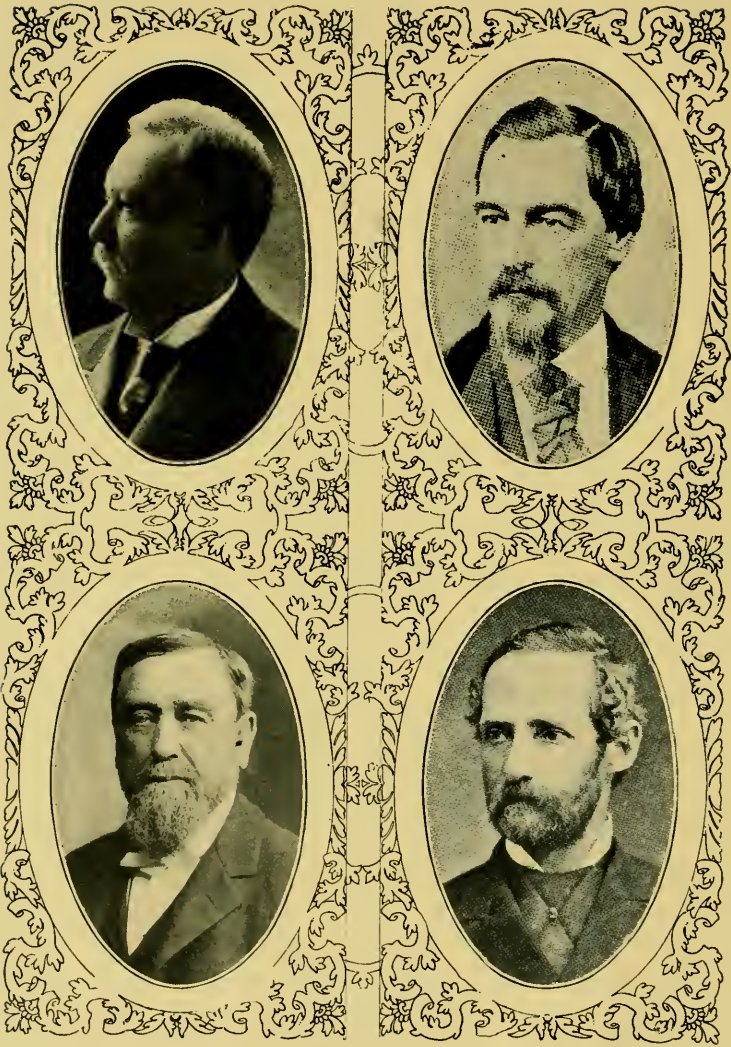
<sup>4</sup> Upon the occasion of Mr. Clarke's failure to make his appointment to speak in the campaign of 1848 *The Gate City* observes: "Wm. Penn Clarke, candidate on the 'codfish and cabbage ticket,' concluded to skip our city in his tour of love for the darkies." (October 26, 1848.)





## SOME OF IOWA'S DELEGATES

Chicago Convention, May 16-18, 1860



WM. P. HEPBURN,  
U. S. Representative

CHARLES C. NOURSE,  
Attorney-General of Iowa

WM. PENN CLARKE,  
Supreme Court Reporter

HENRY O'CONNOR,  
Attorney-General of Iowa

freedom of the New England emigrants beyond the Missouri. In the Constitutional Convention of 1857 the irrepressible champion of the proposal to strike "white" from the supreme statute of Iowa and grant the electoral franchise to negroes was a doughty New Englander, R. L. B. Clarke of Mt. Pleasant, Senator Harlan's home town. On the hustings another valiant champion of that measure was a dashing, brilliant son of Erin, Henry O'Connor of Muscatine, "the best Republican stump speaker in the State."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Jacob Butler, likewise of Muscatine, was another "Abolitionist" whose flag was up and his work on the Underground Railway known;<sup>2</sup> like his law partner, O'Connor, he, too, was regarded as one of "the ablest and most popular speakers in the state."<sup>3</sup> Another Abolitionist in the delegation was the Rev. John Johns of Border Plains, Webster county, of whom more later. All five of those men "died in the ditch" at Chicago, voting for Wm. H. Seward for President.

The delegation contained at least three other "Black" Republicans of the notorious species, all of them trainmen on the Underground Railway: a State Senator, M. L. McPherson, then of Winterset,<sup>4</sup> Mr. H. M. Hoxie of Des Moines, who had been an expert as to the best time and route for shipping "fleeces of wool"<sup>5</sup> and was then secretary of the Republican State Central Committee; and Mr. J. B. Grinnell, whose home in Grinnell was a way-station where "old Brown's" chattels were rebilled and trans-shipped.<sup>6</sup> John Brown wrote a part of his Harper's Ferry proclamation to the Virginians while at Mr. Grinnell's home.<sup>7</sup>

The forwardness of New Englanders in radical anti-slavery propaganda was shown at the annual session of the State Congregational Association in 1859. A resolution was passed June 2d expressing sympathy with brethren under arrest

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<sup>1</sup> *Dubuque Express and Herald*, September 3, 1858: See also editorial in *The Democratic Enquirer*, Muscatine, October 7, 1858, under caption "Henry O'Connor is in Favor of Negro Suffrage."

<sup>2</sup> Byers' *Iowa in War Times*, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *The Hamilton Freeman*, September 24, 1858.

<sup>4</sup> *History of Madison county*, p. 353.

<sup>5</sup> J. B. Grinnell's *Men and Events of Forty Years*, p. 217.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.*, pp. 210-220.

<sup>7</sup> Byers, *Ib.*, p. 24; also Grinnell, *Ib.*, p. 214.

in Ohio on account of their resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law, "an unchristian enactment"; bidding them "be courageous in enduring wrong," as their martyrdom would "call out and increase the humane and Christian opposition . . . to the whole system of American Slavery, with all its attendant evils, whether established by the General Government, sanctioned by the Supreme Court, or enforced by Federal Officers."<sup>1</sup> It further called for the raising of funds to aid the martyrs. The resolution was deftly worded, so as to avoid explicit encouragement of law breaking but the Association was sharply criticized: the *Dubuque Express and Herald* pertinently asking, "How can such a body of men find fault with any other body, whether composed of religionists or not, who may urge resistance to a law which they dislike."<sup>2</sup>

The most vigorous type of abolitionism within the regular Republican party organization developed or "broke out" in Muscatine county—a county that has produced many lusty radicals in the course of its history. In the mass convention in Muscatine, January 7, 1860, to select their delegation to the Republican State Convention, in Des Moines, to choose the delegates to Chicago, the committee on resolutions "recommended" Helper's *Impending Crisis* as a book "eminently worthy of an extensive circulation in this county." Coming close on the heels of the executions at Harper's Ferry in which Iowa was but too closely involved, the Convention could have exceeded its display of belligerent radicalism only by commending Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. for the burden of Helpers' book was "Slavery Must be Abolished."<sup>3</sup> Such an action, as may be imagined, did not pass without comment. The attitude of Iowa in the great political contest then approaching was a matter of national interest for her political complexion was by no means clear or dependable. A correspondent of the *New York Herald* visited the State to determine the drifts of sentiment, his visit coinciding with the discussion pursuant to the Muscatine Resolutions. Writing from Iowa City, January 27th, he says:

<sup>1</sup> See Proceedings in Muscatine *Journal*, June 6, 1859.

<sup>2</sup> *Dubuque Express and Herald*, June 10, 1859.

<sup>3</sup> "As much was now said [1859] and written about Helper's 'Impending Crisis' as formerly about 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'; as much but in a different way," etc. Von Holst, VII, p. 8.

Next to Michigan, Iowa is the most completely and thoroughly abolitionized State in the Northwest; it is therefore not surprising that Brown here found practical exponents of Sewardism, or that Helper finds champions in the deliberative councils of the rulers of the State. Whatever dodges the Republican party elsewhere may resort to to cover their participation directly or indirectly with Brown's attack on Harper's *Ferry* or shield themselves from complicity with the circulation of Helper's book, the Republicans of Iowa feel themselves strong enough to throw off the mask and boldly avow their sympathy with the one and their approval of the other. . . . This [action at Muscatine] is the first public endorsement of the book I have yet heard of; but I have yet to meet with the first Republican here or elsewhere who has read the book who does not endorse it and recommend its circulation.<sup>1</sup>

That the foregoing was a veracious report of impressions received we need not doubt, but the correspondent's conclusions as to the prevalence and potency of abolitionism in Iowa or among Iowa's Republicans in 1860 are not to be accepted. The Abolitionists made up a very considerable company in respect of ability, character and courage, but they did not preponderate, even in the Republican party, let alone in the State. They were, in the language of our military experts, outflankers and skirmishers, or better, a flying squadron of remarkable efficiency, but they were not the main body of troops. The mass of the Republicans were strongly anti-slavery in sentiment and theory, but hostile only to the extension of slavery north of Mason and Dixon's line, the Ohio river and 36° 30'. They were not clamorous for abolition in States where slavery was fixed or formal.<sup>2</sup> There was no favorable echo of the resolution of the Muscatine Republicans so far as the writer can discover, either in the press or in party conventions.

But while Abolitionists, as we shall see, did not prevail in the State at large or predominate in the Republican party, their affiliation with the Republicans and their activity in propaganda put on the party the onus and odium thence resulting. The Democratic press of Iowa teems with screaming

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<sup>1</sup> New York *Herald*, February 19, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> In the debate, February 23, 1857, on the proposal to strike "White" from the State constitution, Mr. Wm. Penn Clarke in repelling the charge that his party was fathering abolitionism, said: "I understand the doctrine of the republican party to be opposition to the extension of slavery." *Debates of the Constitutional Convention*, vol. II, p. 675.



epithets: "Abolitionist," "Amalgamationists," "Miscegenationists," "Black Republicans," "Freedom Shriekers," "Nigger Thieves," "Nigger Worshippers," "Woolies," hurtle through their pages *ad nauseam*. Their editors see frightful visions of "white and negro equality."<sup>1</sup> The organ of Buchanan's administration, The Washington (D. C.) *Union*, pronounced Senator Harlan's sober presentation of the north's objections to the aggressions of the southern leaders in the Senate, March 27, 1856, "an elaborate defence of abolitionism" and declared the "one great object" in his speech to be to establish "equality between the two races."<sup>2</sup> The Republican leaders of Iowa were more or less indifferent to such flouts and taunts. Nevertheless one perceives an extreme sensitiveness to such accusations—the rank and file and most of the leaders constantly declare their hostility to abolitionism. Not only were they sensitive concerning the charge of abolitionism but the dominant men of the party realized that the potent fact chiefly determining the continuance or cessation of Republican supremacy in Iowa was no less dread of abolitionism than dread of slavery. This was a basic condition and assiduous attention thereto was imperative. The reason therefor, arose out of the ancestry of Iowa's population which we must understand if we are to realize the significance of the conduct of Iowa in the great Council in the Wigwam.

## 2. *Southern Stocks and Prejudices Predominant.*

The immigration prior to 1850 came chiefly from south of Mason and Dixon's line and the Ohio river. Between 1850 and 1860 the settlers hailed mostly from southern portions of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, the major number of which were either natives of, or descendants of pioneer emigrants from slave States who in their northern habitats were by trade closely affiliated with the southern peoples. There was at the same time a strong infusion of energetic northern stocks from New England and New York, and of their westernized descendants from northern portions of Pennsylvania and Ohio, and from Michigan and Wisconsin. The influx of the northerners reached high tide between 1855 and

<sup>1</sup> See editorial in *Express and Herald*, Dubuque, September 3, 1858.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *Iowa Democratic Enquirer*, Muscatine, April 10, 1856.



1860. It is the popular notion that the latter elements predominated in Iowa prior to 1860; and, it is true, they were the energizing forces and aggressive factors in public discussion and in the "forward" or progressive movements of those days, both in industry and politics. But they did not constitute the preponderant political population.<sup>1</sup>

Coincident with the incoming of the native Americans was a heavy immigration into Iowa of foreign born peoples, mostly Germans and Irish. In 1850 the native born inhabitants constituted 89 per cent. of the aggregate population and in 1860 they had declined to 84.2 per cent. Of the 21,232 foreign born in 1850, the Germans made up 7,152 and the Irish 4,885, both together constituting 56 per cent. of the total. In 1860 the Irish numbered 28,072 and the Germans 38,555, making 63 per cent. of the 106,081 foreign born citizens. The total population of Iowa in 1860 numbered only 674,913. It is manifest that if the political party in power in Iowa had a narrow margin of popular support the foreign immigrants could easily control the fate of the predominant party if, for any reason, the foreign born citizens were clannish and were aggravated into political concert by threatened partizan action adverse to their welfare.

The geographical and industrial distribution of the population was a potent factor in the politics of the *ante bellum* period. Speaking generally, the settlers of southern antecedents, although scattered thickly in the northern counties, prevailed in the southern half of the State and in the interior and western counties. For the most part they were farmers, much given to hunting and trapping and but comparatively little to commercial or manufacturing pursuits. They lived along the streams and in the wooded lands and pursued farming in an easy-going fashion. The Yankees, on the other hand, were found mainly in the northern and eastern counties, inhabiting the cities and towns, pre-eminent in the advancement of education, especially in promoting schools and colleges, following commercial and industrial pursuits, or farming the uplands or

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<sup>1</sup> In *The Annals*, Vol. VII, pp. 367-379, 446-465, April and July, 1906, the writer has set forth some facts in justification of the assertions above—reprinted with additions under caption *Did Emigrants from New England First Settle Iowa*.

prairies with the latest devices in agricultural machinery. The foreign born population for the most part inhabited the counties bordering on the Mississippi. They were more numerous relatively in the northern counties than in the southern. Thus in 1850 the foreigners in Dubuque county constituted 40 and in 1860 42 per cent. of the population, whereas in Des Moines county (containing Burlington) they were only 15 and 21 per cent. for the respective decennial censuses. In Davis and in Dallas counties the foreign born amounted in each county to but 3 per cent. Even in Polk county, with the capital city, the native born made up 90 per cent. of the population.<sup>1</sup>

The political, religious and social animosities and prejudices of such a mixed population under the conditions of intercommunication of those days were in the nature of things lively and various, and usually stubborn if not violent. The primary prejudices of the native stocks related to slavery. Their secondary prejudices pertained to the foreign immigrant.

The people of southern antecedents had left the south mainly for two reasons. Either economic pressure or hostility to slavery, or both, had induced them to emigrate. The major number had come north to better their economic condition. Many would have brought slaves with them had their ownership and control been feasible. A large proportion were not

<sup>1</sup> Below are given the returns of nativity for six counties on the Mississippi and for six counties bordering on the Des Moines river for 1850 and 1860 :

Counties	1850			1860		
	* Native	Foreign	Per cent. foreign	Native	Foreign	Per cent. foreign
Allamakee -----	637	140	18	8,295	3,942	32
Dubuque -----	6,512	4,301	40	18,206	12,958	42
Clinton -----	2,077	525	19	13,565	5,373	28
Scott -----	4,452	1,520	25	16,706	9,253	36
Des Moines -----	11,008	1,955	15	15,536	4,075	21
Lee -----	16,514	2,287	12	22,747	6,485	22
Davis -----	7,186	71	1	13,296	468	3
Mahaska -----	5,885	103	2	14,109	707	5
Jasper -----	1,255	25	2	9,437	415	4.5
Polk -----	4,399	114	2.5	10,498	1,127	10
Dallas -----	842	12	1	5,082	162	3
Boone -----	667	68	9	3,999	233	5.5

\* Includes some unknown.

particularly concerned about the matter, but were strongly pro-slavery in their sympathies. The more influential and industrious immigrants from the south, however, were decidedly hostile to the extension of slavery, because their adversity in their ancestral States was due to the pressure of slavery and the severe and relentless social discrimination against white labor. Small farming was almost impossible in the south and decent and independent social existence otherwise was so difficult as to be virtually impossible.<sup>1</sup> The agitation for the extension of slavery and the repeal of the Missouri Compromise aroused the intense antagonism of such emigrants in Iowa. It was this element among the southern stocks that joined forces with the New England folk and elected James W. Grimes Governor in 1854, to the utter astonishment of the country at large.

Those who emigrated from the south because of personal hostility to slavery, were usually out-and-out Abolitionists. Such notably were the Friends or Quakers who for the most part came into Iowa in considerable numbers direct from Maryland and North Carolina or roundabout via Ohio and Indiana. The Friends church at Salem in Henry county was known far and wide as the "Abolition Meeting House"<sup>2</sup> and their settlement at Springdale, as already noted, was John Brown's rendezvous, previous to his attack on Harper's Ferry. There was at least one representative of the Quakers on the delegation to Chicago, Senator M. L. McPherson of Winterset. He was a North Carolinian and an Abolitionist. One of the most interesting men among Iowa's delegates at Chicago was Rev.

<sup>1</sup> The following extracts from an able speech of John Edwards of Charleston in the Constitutional Convention of 1857 illustrate the paragraph above:

"I am glad that I have an opportunity here of speaking upon this slavery question. Born in a slave State [Virginia], educated with all the prejudices of a slaveholder, I have been contending for twenty years with the institution of slavery. It was slavery that drove me from my native State." *Debates*, vol. II, p. 681.

"There were denocrats in my section of the State who took the ground that slavery was right; that it was a great moral and political blessing and that it ought to be extended throughout the Union." p. 683

"... slavery is a foul political curse upon the institutions of our country: it is a curse upon the soil of the country, and worse than that it is a curse upon the poor, free laboring white man. . . . they have been driven away [from Virginia] in consequence of the degradation attached to labor as the result of this system of slavery. That is the reason that virginia is becoming depopulated." p. 682.

See also speech of George Ells of Davenport, March 2, p. 907.

<sup>2</sup> See testimony and arguments of attorneys in "An Iowa Fugitive Slave Case" *Annals*, VI, pp. 16, 27, 30-31.

John Johns of Border Plains, Webster county. He was a native of Kentucky, an old line Whig, a Free Will Baptist preacher and an Abolitionist. From his youth he had steadfastly promulgated his views, at camp-meetings and on the hustings, alike, in Ohio and Indiana before coming to Iowa in 1848.

But Abolitionists were extremists and did not dominate in Iowa's southern stock. The preponderant number was hostile alike to the extension of slavery and to its abolition and the resulting Negro Equality involved or dreaded. "We hated an abolitionist as we hated a nigger," wrote a pioneer preacher of Iowa to the writer a short time since.<sup>1</sup> Grimes was keenly alive to this stubborn prejudice in 1854 when he sought the suffrages of the people in his candidacy for Governor. He took pains to guard against the imputations of his opponents to the effect that he would echo "the mad-dog cry of abolitionism."<sup>2</sup> The heated debates in the Constitutional Convention of 1857, over the admissibility of the testimony of negroes in courts, their rights to property, their admission to the State and the Franchise, show us how deeply rooted and potent were the prejudices of the southerners in Iowa's public opinion. The proposal to strike "white" from the Constitution and thus admit the negro to the Franchise was overwhelmingly defeated at the polls. It obtained a majority in but two thinly settled counties, Humboldt and Mitchell, the former near and the latter on the border of Minnesota and the latter over fifty miles back from the river; receiving approximately, in the State at large only 14,000 votes out of 64,000 cast.<sup>3</sup>

The numbers and political significance of the southern stocks is indicated forcefully in the following observations of Daniel F. Miller a Marylander, who played a conspicuous part in the pioneer politics of Iowa from 1839 to 1860, being the first

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<sup>1</sup> The correspondent quoted above, was born in Newark, Ohio, near the center of the State. His parents were Virginians. He told the writer once that he had almost attained his majority before he began to realize that people were or could be born elsewhere than in Virginia, if not in Ohio.

<sup>2</sup> Salter's *Grimes*, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> The exact figures cannot be given as the returns from some of the counties seem to be incomplete. See "Record of Elections" on file in the office of the Sec. of State.

Whig Congressman from southern Iowa,<sup>1</sup> one of the organizers of the Republican party and the party's first Presidential elector in the campaign of 1856. His communication was indited near the close of the Fremont campaign.

When you are informed, sir, that full one-third of all the voters in this (Hall's<sup>2</sup>) district were born in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and other slave holding States, and that in fact, a very large majority of this portion of our voters are the most ardent and active Republicans, and fought best for the defeat of Hall, you will be able to properly appreciate how much of the non-slaveholding portion of the South hate the extension of slavery, and will speak out their sentiments on the subject where they can do it with safety. Having come to Iowa to enjoy the blessings of free labor and progressive industry and by experience learned how superior are Free Institutions to those of Slavery, we never can nor will consent, but oppose to the bitter end, every effort of the Slave Oligarchy to extend Slavery over our Sister Kansas. The Missouri Compromise was the common charter of Freedom for both Iowa and Kansas, and, though the letter of it has been violated as to Kansas, you may rest assured we will maintain the equity and spirit of it at all hazards.<sup>3</sup>

Three instances of the potency of southern prejudices in Iowa's politics in *ante bellum* days may be cited because they exhibit in an interesting fashion the practical consideration given them by some of the men who played prominent roles not only in the struggles between 1856 and 1860 but at Chicago. Mr. Charles C. Nourse, a Marylander by birth, was one of the original advocates of Abraham Lincoln's nomination among the Iowa Delegation, and he ascribes the original impetus to his career in State politics to the adverse prejudices of the southern stock in Iowa. In an interview with the writer, he says: "In 1852 I was elected county prosecutor of Van Buren county as a Whig. In 1854 I was renominated. The Free Soilers were numerous enough in the north half of the county to cause the Convention to put a Free Soiler by the name of French on the ticket. For several reasons I was strong enough to win on my own strength, but my friends soon told me that I could not carry the Free Soiler along with me.

<sup>1</sup> Wm. H. Thompson, Democrat, was first seated, the canvassing board having excluded the Mormon vote of Kanesville, which Fitz Henry Warren had secured for the Whigs; Miller contested, the election was voided, and at a special election Miller regained his seat.

<sup>2</sup> Augustus Hall.

<sup>3</sup> *The St. Charles Intelligencer*, October 2, 1856.



You see a great number of the people of Davis and Van Buren counties had moved to Iowa when they supposed that region was a part of Missouri. In the contest over the boundary, the decision was largely in our favor. The fact that those southerners were in Iowa, did not, however, reconstruct their notions or ways of thinking. A Free Soiler to them was an abolitionist—an equal suffragist who proposed to force on us negro equality, both political and social. I worked manfully on behalf of French but I could not disabuse their minds and I was beaten. It was my defeat that induced my friends to make me Clerk of the House of Representatives in 1854 as a sort of compensation or consolation prize.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. John A. Kasson, although a New Englander, had spent six years in law practice in St. Louis, 1851-57, before coming to Iowa (hence his prior preference for Judge Bates for President in 1860). His political sagacity and capacity for generalship were so soon exhibited that in 1858, he was made chairman of the Republican State Central Committee. In the gubernatorial canvass of 1859 he planned an extended itinerary for Kirkwood in the counties of southern Iowa and writing him July 18th, about the pitfalls to be avoided and local prejudices to be dealt with, he advised: “You are doubtless informed that the population of the southern tier [of counties] generally, commencing with Davis and Wapello and west, embrace people from southern Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, some from Kentucky and Maryland, a few from Tennessee. . . . Those people are generally scared at the idea of abolitionism, particularly in Davis, Appanoose, Decatur and Wayne. It will be well for you to run your Maryland birth a little down there and to pitch into Democracy, the real agitators of the slavery question who have thrust it upon the country perpetually since 1844, and have refused to leave it quiet in any part of the country not even north of 36:30.”<sup>2</sup>

Six months later the correspondent of Horace Greeley’s *Tribune* writing from Des Moines (Jan. 9, 1860) concerning

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Mr. Nourse, *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> The citations above and others subsequently given unless otherwise stated are to be found chiefly in MSS., correspondence, memoranda and newspaper files in the Aldrich Collections of the State Historical Department at Des Moines.

Governor Kirkwood's Inaugural Address, a copy of which he had secured in advance of the delivery, observes: "His remarks on the John Brown matter are satisfactory and are all that could be expected from a Marylander by birth; a Democrat by association up to 1854, and a successful canvasser before the people. . . . His sentiments, I think, are reflective of the tone of feeling in the northwest in the Republican party."

### 3. *The Clash of Native and Foreign Prejudices.*

The prejudices of the native born population adverse to the foreign born immigrant developed mainly in three forms: First, dread lest the foreigner should gain undue power in politics, and promote his interests at the expense of the general welfare; second, antagonism to the doctrines and practices of the Catholic church; and third, opposition to liberty or license in the manufacture and sale of alcoholic liquors as beverages. In such matters human nature is so constituted that if greatly aroused race prejudice, religious fanaticism and extreme measures for social reform engender fierce animosities that sweep aside equity, logic and law and utterly disconcert politicians calculating the force and direction of the normal currents in the spheres of human interest.

#### KNOW-NOTHINGISM AND THE REPUBLICANS.

There seems to be a general opinion that the Know-Nothing or American movement, that incorporated the native prejudice against foreigners in the older eastern and southern States in the fourth and fifth decades of the last century, did not seriously affect Iowa. Discussing the significance of Grimes' success in 1854, Mr. Rhodes says: "The Know-Nothing wave had not reached Iowa."<sup>1</sup> Recently a writer has told us: "The American party reached the zenith of its power and influence [in Iowa] in 1855;"<sup>2</sup> and, again, "The passing of Know-Nothingism from the political stage is closely associated with the origin of the Republican party"<sup>3</sup> (at Iowa City February 22, 1856). Governor Grimes' vigorous decla-

<sup>1</sup> Rhodes' *History*. Ib., Vol. II, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Louis Pelzer, "The Origin and Organization of the Republican Party in Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, Vol. IV, 495.

<sup>3</sup> Ib., p. 503.

ration at Burlington in January, 1856, that "Anti-Know-Nothingism and Anti-Slavery must be two great planks of the Republican organization"<sup>1</sup> and other like expressions from him are cited to indicate that Know-Nothingism was not supreme in politics in Iowa as it was in States of the east and the south. Such a conclusion, however, while justified in considerable measure seriously misleads as to the prevalence and force of Know-Nothingism in Iowa during its flow and ebb in the country at large. There is reason for thinking that the tide of anti-foreign feeling overflowed into Iowa between 1852 and 1856 with some vigor.<sup>2</sup> The events precede too much the period in which we are immediately concerned to justify their recital here, but the receding waves disturbed very decidedly the currents of party strife in Iowa and constituted one of the decisive factors, in the writer's judgment, in bringing about the nomination of Abraham Lincoln.

The anti-foreign influence in party politics in Iowa and the anxiety of the politicians respecting its force and manifestation were pronounced up to the outbreak of the Civil War. Editors and politicians, then, as now, expressed views publicly that indicated what they wanted or thought ought to be rather than what they thought actually was the case. The acts and the private conversation and correspondence of the political leaders spoke louder than formal words designed to hold or attract the doubtful voter or delude the opposition. They show us that political forces of great potency may operate effectually and yet not receive much public recognition such as ceremonial consideration in conventions in the way of party resolutions and tickets. Moreover, the dread of an indefinite, unpretentious but prevalent and perverse force

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*, p. 504.

<sup>2</sup> Col. Joseph Eiboeck, editor since 1874 of *Der Iowa Staats Anzeiger* of Des Moines, spent his youth in Dubuque between 1849 and 1859. In a statement (MSS.) given the writer, August 12, 1907, after describing a physical encounter between the editor of *The Express and Herald* and the postmaster of Dubuque, also editor of *The Observer*, a paper devoted to Know-Nothingism Colonel Eiboeck says of developments in that city: "But the Know Nothing days were stormy ones. In 1853 and '4 there was scarcely a day but fist fights and rows between Know Nothing rowdies and German and Irish born citizens took place. Every house in which a foreign born citizen lived was chalked with an X and thus marked for espionage and persecution, those of Irish and German Catholics in particular."

disturbs all calculations producing sharp reactions within party lines, to the distraction and woe of party organizers.

Politicians and political parties indicate their perplexity as to the best course to pursue respecting an "issue" that burns in the public mind as much by silence as by public pronouncement thereupon or deft or timid reference thereto. In 1855 the Democrats of Iowa spoke out plumply against the anti-foreign propaganda, denouncing the attempts to restrict the rights of naturalized citizens and bespeaking resistance similar to that accorded the Alien and Sedition laws.<sup>1</sup> The Whigs were silent. At the formal organization of the Republican party at Iowa City, February 22, 1856, there was again silence. Silence upon that subject was essential to success but it did not allay the suspicions of the Germans. Mr. L. Mader, editor of *Die Freie Presse* of Burlington had joined the original chorus of calls for the organization of an anti-slavery party in Iowa. Nevertheless the Germans found the Convention far from congenial.<sup>2</sup> Their resolution declaring in favor of the naturalization laws then in force was refused consideration, notwithstanding Governor Grimes favored it.<sup>3</sup> The result was that they withdrew from the Convention. Three or four days later, Mr. Mader with Theodore Guelich, editor of *Der Demokrat* of Davenport, and J. Bittman, editor of *Die Staats Zeitung* of Dubuque, jointly issued a formal letter to their fellow countrymen in the State, exposing the treatment they had received and urging opposition to the new party until it was purged of its malevolent elements.<sup>4</sup> This episode has not been considered as significant or serious because of the predominant influence of Governor Grimes in giving color, tone and direction to the growth of the Republican party. It was, nevertheless, indicative of a high degree of discontent and suspiciousness among the foreign population, which did not disappear until the clash of arms on Southern Battle-fields demonstrated that

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<sup>1</sup> See Platform Section 7: Fairall's *Manual of Iowa Politics*, Vol. I. p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> See letter of "Germania" in *The Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), March 13, 1856.

<sup>3</sup> See Grimes' letter to Salmon P. Chase, March 28, 1856, Salter's *Grimes*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>4</sup> *Daily Journal*, Muscatine, March 17, 1856.

love of the stars and stripes was a common impulse alike of scions of Cavalier and Puritan and sons of Erin and Germania.<sup>1</sup>

Governor Grimes lived in Burlington where Germans were both numerous and justly influential; and although he recognized that the partisans of American exclusiveness had real grievances in some of the eastern States and were a beneficent force in breaking up the old party alignments that had become irrelevant as respects the great issue of slavery, he fairly abominated Know-Nothingism as a principle of public policy.<sup>2</sup> But we err greatly if we conclude that his broad views animated or controlled all the Republican leaders of Iowa in those formative days. On the contrary the reverse is largely true of the majority of the prominent men of the State. Fifty miles west of the river, the Republican leaders and anti-slavery men were saturated with the sentiments of Know-Nothingism.

In Davis county, Mr. James B. Weaver, then an active young lawyer of Bloomfield, first became known as an ardent advocate of American principles. Judge William Loughridge of Oskaloosa was Iowa's member of the committee of correspondence of the Know-Nothings that met at Philadelphia on June 15, 1855, and signed the "call" for the National Convention in Cincinnati, November 30, 1855.<sup>3</sup> R. L. B. Clarke of Mt. Pleasant<sup>4</sup> and John Edwards, editor of *The Patriot* of Chariton, were avowed Know-Nothings;<sup>5</sup> Mr. Wm. Penn Clarke, who was a delegate to the National Republican Convention in Pittsburg in 1856, who had general charge of the Republican campaign in Iowa that year, and in 1860 was the chairman of Iowa's delegation at Chicago, was a noteworthy leader among the Know-Nothings, being sent to

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<sup>1</sup> The Germans of Iowa claim the honorable distinction of offering the first troops ("The Burlington Rifles," Christian L. Mathies, Captain) to aid in suppressing the threatening rebellion in January, 1861. See Eiboeck, *Die Dutchen von Iowa*, p. 84. Major Byers is not disinclined to concede the claim. *Iowa in War Times*, pp. 39-41.

<sup>2</sup> Concerning the Know-Nothing Convention in Iowa City, March 5th, Grimes wrote Clarke: "I was so disgusted with their proceedings . . . that I have disliked to read, talk, write, or hear about it." Burlington, April 3, 1856.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Oskaloosa Herald*, September 14, 1855.

<sup>4</sup> *Debates of the Constitutional Convention*, 1857, Vol. II, p. 862.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, Vol. I, p. 187.



the celebrated Grand Council that met at Philadelphia on February 19, 1856. Wells Spicer, editor of *The Tipton Advertiser*, was a staunch American and outspoken in his advocacy of a policy of foreign exclusion, going so far as to express regret at the failure of the Americans in the Republican Convention at Iowa City to express themselves vigorously when they had the majority to do so. Iowa probably never had a more acute observer and tactician or a more resourceful political leader than the late Judge N. M. Hubbard of Cedar Rapids. He was one of the original movers in the organization of the Republican party, he and Mr. C. C. Nourse being the secretaries of the Convention at Iowa City. Writing Penn Clarke, December 24, 1855, from Marion, Judge Hubbard asked whether "we—republicans—had not better call our State Convention at the same time the K. N.'s have theirs. I believe a fusion is necessary and must be had." Two weeks later (January 9, 1856) he wrote, "If we can secure you [Clarke] the nomination of the Republicans (for Attorney General) and the other good men from the K. N.'s and Republicans about equal, can't your Convention resolve to make no nomination and support ours? I am satisfied unless we can make a union on the Nebraska question of the Republicans and the K. N.'s we shall all be in danger of getting our bottom knocked out . . . Let us do all possible to effect a fusion." Were his proposals realized? Not entirely *pro forma* but in substance and effect they were.

The Germans, as we have seen, revolted because they felt that the Convention was dominated by Know-Nothings. The Democrats flouted the Republicans with the charge of being mere Know-Nothings in masquerade.<sup>1</sup> On March 5th, the American Convention of 100 delegates or representatives, met in Iowa City and "confirmed" the ticket agreed upon by the Republican Convention two weeks preceding, except that different national electors were nominated.<sup>2</sup> Mr. John Mahin

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<sup>1</sup> Referring April 12th to Mr. Martin L. Morris, the Republican nominee for State Treasurer who was elected by the Democrats in 1852, *The Guthrie Sentinel* of Panora said that he owed his present nomination to "Know Nothing Woolies of Iowa." See also *Dubuque Herald*, September 18, 1859, editorial, *German Republicans of Wisconsin and Iowa*.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated at Iowa City, March 6, 1856, to *The Des Moines Valley Whig*, March 12th.

of Muscatine on February 29th, placed "at the mast head" of *The Journal*, the American National Ticket of which he said, "it is the best the party could have chosen", together with the "Republican State Ticket" and the "American City Ticket." On March 15th, without comment, he removed the first. The Republicans however through many of the party organs, denied the charge of collusion stoutly. *The Cincinnati Times*, however, declared that three out of the four nominees on the Republican ticket in Iowa for State officers were Americans.<sup>1</sup> The Americans became restless at the recreancy of the Republican press. Judge Loughridge in some indignation wrote Clarke concerning the course of the Republican editors: "The State ticket nominated by both parties, they denominate the 'Republican' ticket instead of claiming, as the fact is, that it is a 'Union' or 'Peoples' Ticket'." He informs Clarke that immediately following *The Oskaloosa Herald's* declaration or pledge that Mr. S. A. Rice, the candidate for Attorney General was opposed to Fillmore and a Republican, "the Davis County American paper took Mr. Rice's name from the ticket." It was, no doubt, in part anxiety concerning the consequences of this alleged double dealing and the revolts occurring or threatened, that induced N. M. Hubbard on March 28th to write Clarke: "What do you think of politics now? Are we going to unite or burst all up? Give me some advice. I am editing a paper. I hardly know what to do." On the same day, Governor Grimes wrote Salmon P. Chase of Ohio: "The Fillmore nomination will damage us considerably in this State, and I fear will render the result doubtful. I think it will affect us here as much as in any other State in the Union, especially in the southern part, where the people are mostly southern by birth."<sup>2</sup> His anticipations were verified.

An exceedingly interesting sign that Know-Nothingism was a blazing phenomenon high in the political heavens of Iowa in 1856, even, if it be true, that it had passed its zenith in 1855, was the commotion produced in the ranks of the Democratic party in March, 1856, by the public charge and sub-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The Guthrie Sentinel*, September 13, 1856.

<sup>2</sup> Salter's *Grimes*, p. 80.

stantial demonstration that George W. McCleary, then Secretary of State, was a member of a Know-Nothing Lodge in good standing. He was a popular official, and a prospective candidate for renomination, with no serious opposition apparent. The exposure seems to have paralyzed him and dazed his party friends, for he soon formally announced that for sundry reasons he would not be a candidate for re-election, and thanked his friends for their kindness to him in the past, etc.<sup>1</sup>

SENATOR HARLAN'S FEARS AND PROPOSAL.

In some respects, the most striking evidence the writer has come upon, showing the existence in those formative days of a strong undertow of anxiety among Republicans of Iowa, lest the influx of Europeans untrained in the arts of self-government, should overwhelm our free institutions is the following letter of Senator Harlan to Clarke, dated at Washington, D. C., December 1, 1856:

"It probably has occurred to you that the construction of four parallel lines of railroads through Iowa, will enable the opposition to flood the State with foreigners, who will probably swamp us at the polls in 1858 and 1860. Would it not be well to provide a Registry law by act of the Legislature or to require it in the Constitution? Unless something of this kind is done, I fear we will be unable to maintain our position in the galaxy of Republican States."

Several facts make Senator Harlan's letter conclusive proof of the prevalence of the fears that made up the warp and woof of the American creed or cult. First it was written three weeks following the victory of his party, both in Iowa and generally throughout the north in the Fremont campaign. Second, he suggested the consideration of the wisdom of acting adversely towards the promotion of railroad construction in Iowa when the whole population of the State was feverishly pushing their congressmen to advance Iowa's interests by federal land grants. Third, he exhibited his proposal when the agitation for constitutional revision was culminating and he must have contemplated serious consideration of the limi-

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<sup>1</sup> *The Daily Journal* (Muscatine), March 6, 1856.

tations affecting the electoral privileges of the naturalized citizens in the forthcoming convention. Fourth, he wrote the letter when he was under no stress of mind as to his own political fortunes, his term as Senator not expiring until 1860, three years thereafter. Fifth, he communicated his suggestion to an active, ambitious leader, not only of his own party but of the American or Know-Nothing division thereof, and a known aspirant for senatorial honors. Senator Harlan was not a trimmer in politics nor a tight-rope-walking type of statesman, but one who thought earnestly upon public matters and spoke guardedly. We may conclude that he suffered from no hallucinations as to the political conditions of his constituents and urged no temporizing expedient for the sake of short-sighted party advantage. The letter was not made public at the time but it must have been written with a conscious expectation that it would influence Mr. Clarke and through him the leaders of the party in the State, first in legislative halls and second, in the constitutional convention in which Mr. Clarke was to be *facile princeps*.

PROTESTANT VERSUS CATHOLIC.

The second great fact that provoked the animosities of the native born immigrants was dread of Catholicism. Here again ancestral traditions and geographical and industrial distribution mainly account for the prejudices and performances of Iowa's Republicans between 1856 and 1860. Excepting the French, German and Irish the pioneers were chiefly communicants or adherents of Baptist, Campbellite or Christian, Methodist and Presbyterian churches; these churches in 1850 numbering 139 all told. Congregationalists, Episcopalians and Lutherans, Moravians and Quakers made up the balance of a vigorous protestant population, the reported numbers of all their churches being only 31 in 1850. The Catholics were reported as having 18 churches in that year and 16 of that number were located in counties on the Mississippi. There were none farther west than Johnson and Wapello counties.<sup>1</sup>

Such disproportions in relative numbers and such localiza-

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<sup>1</sup> U. S. Census, 1850.

tion in the regions controlled by the natives and foreign citizens and sundry other conditions engendered strenuous competitive proselytism and much malevolence. In those days churchmen and preachers generally believed in their creeds intensely and enforced or sought to enforce their tenets strictly. Those professing religious faith or in the active affiliation with its adherents did not await a morning newspaper to determine their belief and state of mind, but felt firmly and were terribly in earnest. Congregations were in truth churches militant. Now the mystery, the silent and the self-sufficient procedure of the priests of the Catholic church created huge phantasies in the minds of the Protestants. To nine out of ten churchmen in Iowa the Catholic church was an organization they had known or heard of somewhat "down east" but which was almost unfamiliar to the pioneers west of the river counties. Moreover the potent influence of the foreign citizen in politics—bidden and pushed thereto, be it noted, usually by designing and unscrupulous native politicians in the cities—and the coincidence of the Catholic faith with their political activity aggravated and superheated the natural antipathy of the native American stocks against the Catholics. The foremost factor in this anti-Catholic or anti-foreign propaganda were the preachers and adherents of the Methodist church, the dominant church in point of numbers and influence in Iowa prior to 1860. Senator Harlan was a conspicuous member and staunch promoter of the faith of that church, a fact that brought him many flings from anti-Know-Nothing critics.<sup>1</sup> Two illustrations taken from the first manifestations of Republicanism in Guthrie county will substantiate the foregoing and at the same time show how intimately the persons involved in the fateful decision at Chicago May 18, 1860, were likewise previously associated.

On March 16, 1856, the Republicans of Guthrie county had their first convention at Panora, the county seat. Their committee on resolutions reported the following declaration of principles among others, which was adopted apparently with-

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<sup>1</sup> See letter of Col. Louis Schade of Burlington in *Iowa Weekly State Reporter*, June 8, 1859.



out dissent: "That we stand for the constitution and the principles therein guaranteed, and we deny the right of foreign despotisms—ecclesiastical or otherwise, to interfere with the rights or dictate the action of Freemen in the exercise of religious or political principles granted to us by that sacred instrument."<sup>1</sup> One of the committee signing that declaration was Thomas Seeley, who a few months later was chosen by Dallas, Guthrie and Polk counties as their delegate in the Constitutional Convention of 1857, defeating M. M. Crocker a lawyer of Ft. Des Moines, who later had a brilliant army career in the Civil War. Thomas Seeley was one of the original Lincoln men at the Chicago Convention. On the very day the Convention met at Panora, Judge James Henderson of Panora, a member of the Methodist church wrote a letter setting forth his "disgust with members and ministers of the M. E. church. I have good reason to believe that there is a large majority of them [who] have joined that disgraceful organization commonly called Know-Nothings."<sup>2</sup>

#### THE MAINE LIQUOR LAW.

The advent of the Republican party in Iowa was coincident with the culmination of a campaign for the suppression of intemperance—a vexatious problem that always tends to split political parties asunder. Here again the cleavage of interests and opinions broke in large part along racial lines; yet with much confusion and counter rifts within the native citizenship. The native stocks in religious professions were as we have seen, chiefly Baptists, Campbellites or Christians, Methodists and Presbyterians. These forces with the aggressive Congregationalists constituted the vanguard in the agitation that resulted in 1855 and 1856 in the adoption of the "Maine law" prohibiting the manufacture and sale of spirituous liquors except via a local State agent for "mechanical, medicinal and sacramental purposes." The Whigs in 1854 had first declared for such a law. The Republicans in 1856 became sponsors for prohibition as they have been ever since.

It is doubtless true in the large, as Mr. Rhodes declares,

<sup>1</sup> *The Guthrie Sentinel*, March 22, 1856.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, April 19, 1856.

that "All the advocates of the Maine law were anti-slavery men," but his conclusion that "it is not apparent that the cause of freedom lost by union with the cause of prohibition"<sup>1</sup> is to be accepted with some hesitation. The opponents of slavery or of its extension in Iowa as in nearly all the States of the northwest, made a complex of exceedingly heterogeneous groups that were to each other,—slavery aside—mutually repellant particles. This was notably so in Ohio, Michigan and Iowa, where Germans were numerous and the advocates of temperance aggressive and in the first and third States mentioned more or less preponderant.

Needless to observe this paternalistic legislation was regarded by the French, Germans, Irish, Hollanders and Swiss in Iowa as an outrageous interference with some of their most cherished rights of personal liberty and utterly indefensible. Their resistance was pronounced and continuous. Very soon the Republicans began to "weaken" the law in order to placate the contentious Germans. First the county agent was abolished; then, in 1857 "home-made" cider and wine were made salable; and in 1858 wine and beer were defined as non-intoxicants and breweries authorized and saloons for the sale thereof legitimized. But notwithstanding all parties, friends and opponents of severe measures, were dissatisfied.

The effect of the espousal of the Maine law upon the party strength of the Republicans cannot be definitely measured, but unquestionably it was adverse. Both German and Irish immigrants at first very largely, if not universally, joined the Democratic party. Their intense hatred of governmental oppression and slavery, however, made them turn toward the Whigs and then the Republicans. The Know-Nothing movement and radical temperance legislation produced a violent revulsion. Slavery was abhorrent; but so was such sumptuary legislation. The former was an evil remote and only vaguely felt; the latter was an immediate palpable outrage, depriving them of rights and pleasures as dear as life itself. Twenty and thirty years later when the Republicans allied themselves with advocates of such restrictive legislation thou-

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<sup>1</sup> *History of the U. S.*, Vol. II, p. 50.

sands of Germans in eastern Iowa deserted the party with the result that in 1890 the first Democratic governor since 1854 was elected. On the other hand the party's effort to placate the Germans alienated the extremists who insisted upon rigorous enforcement of the prohibitory law.

#### 4. *Smouldering Fires in 1857-1858.*

In the Constitutional Convention of 1857, the irritation and suspicions incident to Know-Nothingism, smouldered and on occasion blazed out. Members charged each other with adherence to its creed and with being beneficiaries of its propaganda. It is clear from the debates that the local groups or lodges were then inclined to affiliate or fuse as readily with the Democrats as with the Republicans, depending upon local conditions. When the Committee reported Article 3 on "Right of Suffrage," recommending almost no change in the preliminary residence required, Mr. Wm. Penn Clarke urged that the time be increased from six months to one year in the State and from twenty days to six months in the county. In his speech, we find a distinct echo of Senator Harlan's letter previously quoted. "Within the next ten years," he said, "it is more than probable that we shall have an influx of population into our State of those who have no interest with our people, and who will leave us when the public works [R. R.'s] are completed, which induced them to come here. If the members of this Convention desire to place the people of this State at the mercy of this class of population, well and good; they can do so. But I do not mean that it shall be done with my consent."<sup>1</sup> The first proposal was rejected; the vote, however, was not recorded; the second was lost by a close vote of 11 to 12.<sup>2</sup>

In the campaign of 1857, the Republicans, either because they deemed it safe and harmless, or were forced to screw their courage up to the sticking-point, squinted at the demands of the foreign citizens. Their platform contained some masterly generalities to the effect that "the spirit of our institutions as well as the constitution of our Country

<sup>1</sup> *Debates*, vol. II, p. 864.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 868.

guarantee liberty of conscience and equality of rights," and they explicitly declare their opposition to "all legislation impairing their security."<sup>1</sup> In a practical way, they exhibited their solicitude by nominating Mr. Oran Faville as their candidate for first lieutenant-governor under the new Constitution, as a "compliment" due the many estimable foreign citizens in the party in the State. But despite their anxious care, the thing would not down. In Burlington, the election went "disastrously" for the Republicans. No less a notable than the brilliant Fitz Henry Warren was defeated in his candidacy for the legislature, because Judge Stockton wrote Clarke, "The Americans generally voted the Democratic ticket. This was caused in part by having a German on the ticket and by a great lukewarmness on the part of our friends."

In his last message to the General Assembly, in January, 1858, Governor Grimes urged the passage of a law for the registration of voters to protect the ballot box and to preserve the "elective franchise in its purity." He closed his recommendation with these significant observations: "With such a law, and with the strict and honest enforcement of the naturalization laws, we shall cease to see parties arrayed against each other on account of the birthplace of those who compose them, and every *bona fide* citizen will be secure in his just weight in the affairs of state. Without such a law, judging from recent events, it is feared that popular elections will become a reproach." The effort to secure a registration law was fruitless. The measure introduced was apparently very mild; "the odious section" (No. 13) merely required the naturalized citizen when challenged, to exhibit his papers to the Judges of Election. Its effect, however, would have been unequal. The opposition was intense. The passage of the bill was defeated under the leadership of D. A. Mahoney of Dubuque, who resorted to the desperate procedure of having the opponents leave the House of Representatives in a body, thus breaking a quorum.<sup>2</sup> In their platform that year, the Republicans were discreet—that is, silent. They denounced

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<sup>1</sup> Fairall, *Ib.*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> See account of *The Herald* of Dubuque, September 21, 1859.

the Buchanan administration, the "infamous Lecompton Constitution" and with perfect abandon, insisted upon economy in the State administration and liberal appropriations for internal improvements.<sup>1</sup>

The smouldering fires of discontent and suspicion, however, did not subside. Smoke was everywhere and flashes and spurts of flame were seen. Far inland, among the towns and settlements along the Cedar, Iowa, Skunk, Des Moines and Raccoon rivers, Know-Nothingism or antipathy to the foreign born was the animus of much discussion. The open advocacy of exclusion or of severe restrictions upon their political privileges was common although the expediency of avowing the purpose was felt to be doubtful. The two parties tacked and veered, each charging the other with surreptitious alliances and fell designs. In Boone, Hamilton and Webster counties, the air was split with exploding charges and counter charges thrown by the highly suspicious patriots. The press bristled with such gracious references as "bog trotters," and "whiskey bruisers," "wooden shoes," and "beer guzzlers." "Freedom to the Nigger," and "Begone you dog!" to the foreigner were twin phrases that the Democratic press rang the changes on with great gusto.<sup>2</sup> "It is the same sentiment," continues the address to our "Adopted Citizen" that "gives a negro a vote in Connecticut and tramples your brethren in the dust for twenty-one years. For shame!"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fairall, *Ib.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>2</sup> *Ft. Dodge Sentinel*, September, 4, 1858.

<sup>3</sup> *Ft. Dodge Sentinel*, September 4, 1858. The following, purporting to be a letter signed, "A Foreigner," is reproduced from the *Sentinel* of October 9th. It illustrates not a little of the method and substance of political discussion in the inland counties in 1858. The editor was the late John F. Duncombe:

IRISHMEN! GERMANS!  
FOREIGNERS OF WHATEVER NAME  
OR NATION!  
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE FOLLOWING  
INSULT TO YOU?

The Boonesboro *News*, the ablest Republican paper published in this Judicial District, in commenting upon the speech of Mr. Elwood, our Democratic Candidate for Attorney General, uses the following language:

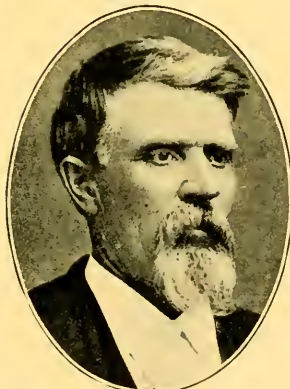
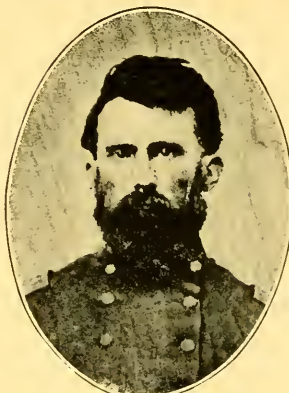
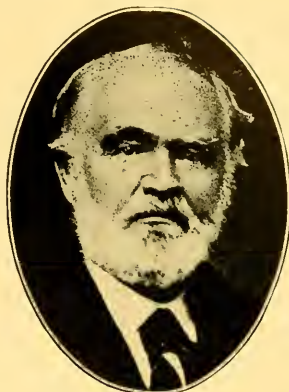
"Is not the Negro Race as capable of exercising the right of suffrage as the hordes of Foreigners, which yearly land upon our shores; and is not their right as good . . . Where can a more ignorant degraded set of beings be found than nine-tenths of our foreign population, and yet they are placed upon the scale of equality with the native citizen, both politically and socially."

We ask *any foreigner* after being called "Bog Trotters and Whiskey Bruisers" by the *Hamilton Freeman* which was fully endorsed by the late



## SOME OF IOWA'S DELEGATES

Chicago Convention, May 16-18, 1860



J. F. BROWN,  
Lawyer

JOHN W. THOMPSON,  
State Senator

MICAJAH BAKER,  
Lawyer

W. A. WARREN,  
Merchant

BENJAMIN RECTOR,  
Lawyer

E. G. BOWDOIN,  
Lawyer



This backfiring and bushwhacking took place in the western parts of the northern, or second Congressional District, comprehending nearly two-thirds of the State. That year the Republican congressional candidate was Wm. Vandever of Dubuque, who from 1856 to 1859 was pelted with the charge that he had joined a Know-Nothing Lodge in Dubuque, in 1856, becoming an officer thereof.<sup>1</sup> Evidently he suffered a change of heart, due either to deliberation or discretion or discipline, for French, Germans, Irish and Swiss swarmed in Dubuque. The suspicions of the Germans of Davenport, however, were not wholly allayed by his discreet and favorable utterances, for one of their most distinguished representatives, Hans Reimer Claussen, a one-time member of the German Parliament, demanded a more specific statement from Mr. Vandever. On September 8, 1858, he submitted and asked replies to the following questions:

"1. Are you willing, when a member of Congress, vigorously and with all your power to oppose any attempt to change the laws of Naturalization so as to extend the time of probation?"

"2. As any legislative measures which prevent a naturalized citizen, after his naturalization for a certain length of time from voting, are equivalent to the extension of the time of probation, are you willing to act for or against such measures?"

Mr. Vandever forthwith replied (September 11th) explicitly: "In reply I have to say that I am content with the period now prescribed by law for the naturalization of persons of foreign birth, and were I a member of Congress, I should not hesitate to oppose any effort that might be made to extend the time.

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County Convention in a resolution which was offered by the Hon. C. C. Carpenter. . . . Can you do it *Irishmen*? Can you do it *Germans*? Can you do it *Norwegians*? Can you do it *Swedes*? Will you lick the dust from the feet of your Tyrants? . . . Arouse! Awake! & &  
(Signed) A Foreigner.

An examination of the files of *The Freeman* does not disclose any such statement as *The Sentinel* refers to. Mr. Aldrich informs the writer that it was not uncommon for his partizan critics in those days to suffer from delusions that induced them to assume that he must have said or probably would say sundry things alleged against him.

<sup>1</sup> *The Herald* of Dubuque, September 18, 1859, and the *Mississippi Valley Register*, of Guttenberg, May 26, 1859.

“In reply to the other inquiry, I have to say that I deem it peculiarly a subject for state legislation, but I am free to confess that when admitted to citizenship, I know of no reason why a man should be subjected to further probation as a qualification for voting. I certainly would not discriminate in this particular, between citizens of native and citizens of foreign birth.”<sup>1</sup>

5. *The Blaze over the Massachusetts Law.*

The inattention of the Republicans in 1858 respecting the status of foreign born citizens was not permitted in 1859. The subject loomed up so suddenly and hugely that neither leaders nor party managers were allowed to dodge or hedge or take to the woods. The Republicans of Massachusetts had by legislative act, proposed to increase the limitations upon electoral privileges of foreigners by adding two years to the probationary period. The prominence of Massachusetts in the Nation's affairs immediately made the measure a matter of keen national interest. Iowa was then or later fondly called “The Massachusetts of the West,” because of the prominence of New Englanders and Puritanic principles in the State.

The Republican press of the middle and western States seems at first to have maintained silence as regards the enactment. In March a German, “An Iowa Farmer and True Republican,” having looked “in vain” for “disapprovement of such a breach of plighted faith,” and fearful that such silence meant approval wrote Greeley's *Tribune* protesting against the “unjust illiberal and offending conduct of the party in New England.” He was not unmindful of the evils in elections and favored a “good registry law” based upon “strict equality” of treatment of foreign born. He urged that the naturalization period be reduced to three years and the right to vote be withheld for two years after. He did not blame the party for what was done in one State, but New Jersey was then apparently about to follow Massachusetts and “we have cause for suspicion” that the Republican party

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<sup>1</sup> For the letters of Messrs. Claussen and Vandever quoted above the writer is indebted to Dr. August P. Richter, now and for many years past editor of *Der Demokrat* of Davenport. Dr. Richter's kindness and painstaking in the recovery of data in response to inquiries are but scantily acknowledged in this brief note.

"everywhere might attempt to treat us in the same manner as long as we hear not a single voice in our defense." He declares that "Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, New York and perhaps Pennsylvania can be counted Republican through the strength of the German Republican vote." If the Republicans think that they can ignore the just claims of the Germans "I will only remind them of the fact that Caesar's legions were smashed in the woods of Germany." His vigorous letter drew an editorial on "Naturalization and Voting" from Greeley who denied that the law of Massachusetts was arbitrary in purpose: it was "based on a sound principle but wrong in going further than the principle requires." The *Tribune* concurred in the writer's suggestion of naturalization after three and electoral privileges after five years.<sup>1</sup>

Meantime the Germans of Iowa all along the Mississippi were aroused and became belligerent. They proceeded aggressively to discover and to expose the attitude of the Republicans towards the policy of the party in Massachusetts. They exhibited alike, good tactics and good strategy. Their reconnaissance in April took the form of a letter to the Congressional leaders. Three interrogatories were addressed to them which in substance were (1) Were they in favor of the laws of Naturalization then in force and opposed to all extension of the probation time; (2) Was it the duty of Republicans to "war upon each and every discrimination that may be attempted between the native born and adopted citizens, as to right of suffrage"; and (3) Did they condemn the late action of the Republicans in the Massachusetts Legislature?<sup>2</sup> The prominent signers were Mr. John Bittman and Dr. Carl Hillguertner of Dubuque, Messrs. Theodore Alshausen, Theodore Guelich and Henry Lischer, of Davenport, and others of Burlington, Ft. Madison and Keokuk.

Senator Grimes first responded (April 30th) declaring concisely, the measure of Massachusetts "false and dangerous

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<sup>1</sup> N. Y. *Tribune* (w.), April 16, 1859. For the citations given in the paragraph the writer is indebted to Mr. John F. Schee of Indianola, who courteously granted him permission to examine his file of the weekly *Tribune*.

<sup>2</sup> See Salter's *Grimes*, pp. 119-120.



in principle” and condemning it “without equivocation or reserve.” Senator Harlan’s reply (May 2nd) was an extended discussion of the matter in issue.<sup>1</sup> His letter was reprinted in broadside for general distribution, the author mindful, no doubt, that his re-election to the Senate would be a matter of lively public interest in January, 1860. Colonel S. R. Curtis of Keokuk responded (May 13th) at considerable length, but plumply saying “as to two years additional probation, I am utterly opposed to it.” Mr. Vandever, answering (May 21st) was no less explicit, being opposed to any action adverse to the rights of adopted citizens under the laws then in force, and deploring the action of Massachusetts. He called attention to his letter to Mr. H. R. Claussen, written in 1858. It is not insignificant here that Abraham Lincoln’s letter<sup>1</sup> (May 17th) to Theodore Canisius of Illinois was reprinted in *Der Demokrat* of Davenport, in which he expressed himself in clear, strong terms upon this issue, saying, “as I understand the Massachusetts provision, I am against its adoption in Illinois or in any other place where I have a right to oppose it.”<sup>2</sup>

Meantime, Mr. John A. Kasson, chairman of the Republican State Central Committee, who always could quickly distinguish a hawk from a handsaw realized the danger to Republican supremacy in Iowa imminent in the intense, belligerent feelings of the Germans and had acted. He and his confreres of the committee made public a resolution adopted by them April 18th, refusing all countenance to the Massachusetts law and repudiating the principles thereby exemplified.<sup>3</sup> Among the co-signers with Mr. Kasson, were Mr. Nicholas J. Rusch, a prominent German of Davenport, and Mr. Thomas Seeley of Guthrie county, already referred to, all three being members of Iowa’s Republican Delegation at Chicago the following year.

This unanimity of opposition among the foremost Republicans to the movement in Massachusetts, did not allay the suspicions of all Germans nor did it meet with uniform endorse-

<sup>1</sup> *Burlington Hawk-eye*, May 11, 1859.

<sup>2</sup> *Der Demokrat*, May 25, 1859; all of the letters referred to in the paragraph above were published therein on the same or previous dates.

<sup>3</sup> *The Guardian*, Independence, May 5, 1859.

ment among the Republicans. A bitter not to say virulent discussion was precipitated, that did not end until the close of the campaign in the Fall. In the first place, as the Democratic press was alert and prompt to point out, the action of the State Central Committee was adversely regarded by many Republican editors, *The Oskaloosa Herald* declaring that "the Committee have usurped its authority, and by its late pronouncement, compromises the Republican party of Iowa."<sup>1</sup> Simultaneously with the disapproval of the action of Massachusetts, such influential papers as *The Hamilton Freeman*, *The Muscatine Journal*, *The Vinton Eagle*<sup>2</sup> and *The Independence Guardian*, were advocating a Registration law which the foreign born citizens knew was aimed chiefly at them. In addition to these irritating causes, Senator Harlan's letter contained not a little that aroused criticism and recrimination. Instead of replying briefly to Messrs. Hillguertner, Alshausen *et al*, Senator Harlan discussed at length the general considerations involved, the evils of unrestricted immigration and the grave dangers possible in the future. More than this, he dealt with the problem of negro slavery as well as with the problem of naturalization and electoral privileges. One can find little or nothing in his discussion of the subject against which objection will lie on abstract or philosophical grounds. He was lucid, forceful and conservative and considerate of pros and cons, both as to the future and the present. There were evils and Congress and the States must some time deal with them. Nevertheless, he concluded by rejection of the action of Massachusetts. Still his letter brought upon him sharp rejoinders. The foremost cause, doubtless, was the fact that he was Iowa's senior Senator, whose term of office was about to expire, and he had already achieved fame at Washington. Further he was prominent in the Methodist church, a factor of no mean power in politics. The immediate causes of the debate his letter produced were the adverse inferences his critics could easily draw from his philosophical generalities. All persons "who possessed requisite virtue and intelligence" should be permitted to vote; but it was "very

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The Express and Herald*, Dubuque, May 8, 1859.

<sup>2</sup> *The Express and Herald*, May 1, 1859.

difficult to establish a standard": "yet the latter object can be partially attained by indirection." He refers to "the mass of foreigners" and "mendicants, vagrants and criminals" that come with them. The rules of "restriction should be general" but "the length of the probationary residence must ever remain an open question"; for his mind's eye foresaw a time when "our relations with the hordes of Asia" might result in an immigration of a "crude population of millions," sufficient, if admitted to citizenship, to inundate our cities, and eastern and western States.<sup>1</sup>

The criticisms of Mr. J. B. Dorr, editor of *The Herald* of Dubuque, were perhaps typical of those in the Democratic press. He commented caustically upon the generalities of Mr. Harlan's argument. If the matter should be treated as an "open question" and the best results were to be obtained by "indirection" he necessarily squinted favorably upon the measures of Know-Nothingism. "They [the Republicans] endeavor first by the false cry of 'nigger, nigger' to enlist against the Democracy the free white sons of Europe and when the Democratic party is put down they then turn round and call their allies 'mendicants, vagabonds and criminals' as Senator Harlan does. Nor is this all, but they proscribe them and place above them in political rights the greasy runaway negroes from southern plantations as Republican Massachusetts does."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most telling arraignment of the Republicans anent the Massachusetts law was put forth in a letter of Col. Louis Schade of Burlington and widely published.<sup>3</sup> He pointed out that the American party in the south and the Republican party in the north had the same warp and woof in their makeup, that the *N. Y. Tribune* had then but recently said that it would "heartily and zealously support" for president "one like John Bell, Edward Bates, or John M. Botts," well-known "chiefs of Know-Nothingism," that the Repub-

<sup>1</sup> The writer is indebted to Dr. G. E. Thode of Burlington for a copy of Senator Harlan's letter as it appeared in *The Hawk-eye*, May 11, 1859.

<sup>2</sup> *The Herald*, Dubuque, May 13, 1859.

<sup>3</sup> *The Weekly Iowa State Reporter*, Iowa City, June 8, 1859, and *The Herald*, Dubuque, May 31st; some portions are omitted in the latter. Colonel Schade was later for nearly thirty years editor of the Washington (D. C.) *Sentinel*.

licans and Americans or Know-Nothings of New Jersey and New York in 1858 had made agreements to extend the probationary period and he cites Horace Greeley's approval. He then pays his respects to the letter of Mr. Harlan "Republican Senator, Bishop of the Methodist church *in spe*, some years ago a good Know-Nothing<sup>1</sup> and also a Negro Equality Apostle" whose references to the "mass" of foreigners, "mendicants," "Asiatics" etc., arouse his ire. The Yankee and his blue laws, his Puritanism and Pharasaism receive his finest scorn. The "Maine law" he observes "like everything intolerant and despotic originated in New England. . . . The Republican party was started in New England, the brains, shoulders and head of the party are in New England. What New England commands, the Republicans of other States obey."<sup>2</sup> He says pointedly that an ignorant negro after one year's residence in Massachusetts could cast his ballot, but a residence of seven years would be required of a Carl Schurz.

These arguments of *The Herald* and Colonel Schade were given added pith and point by the spread of a substantial rumor in May that plans were under way in some of the northern States to people the unsettled counties of northwestern Iowa with negroes, emigrants and refugees from the south. Fat was added to the flames when a Republican alderman of Keokuk flippantly asserted that "he would rather see Iowa colonized by negroes than by . . . Dutch and Irish."<sup>3</sup>

The alignment and morale of the Democrats were thrown into confusion, however, by a heavy rear fire from their own ranks and from the national citadel itself. Lewis Cass, Secretary of State, on May 17th, had written Felix Le Clere of Tennessee, that naturalization in this country would not "exempt" him from claims of France for unfulfilled military service avoided by his emigration should he return to his

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<sup>1</sup> Colonel Schade refers to a common charge that in 1856 at Dubuque Senator Harlan was initiated in a Know-Nothing lodge along with Wm. Vandever. See *The Herald*, Dubuque, on editorial page, May 26, 1859. Reasserted September 18th, in editorial on "German Republicans of Iowa and Wisconsin." The writer has seen neither denial nor proof of the charge.

<sup>2</sup> "What Massachusetts does is felt from the Atlantic to the Pacific," Carl Schurz on *True and False Americanism*, an address delivered in Faneuil Hall, Boston, April 18, 1859. See *N. Y. Tribune* (w.), April 30th.

<sup>3</sup> *The Herald*, May 26, 1859, following of *The Keokuk Journal*.



native land.<sup>1</sup> The dismay and fury of the anti-administration Democrats was great indeed, for *The Herald* exclaimed that the "worst Know-Nothing in the country never conceived of a depth of humiliation for the naturalized citizen equal to that proposed by Gen. Cass as the organ of the Administration," and in most peremptory terms Mr. Dorr demanded the summary dismissal of Cass from the cabinet. With this protest, a call for a county Democratic convention was issued and the anti-administration forces asked to convene with a view to prevent an endorsement of Buchanan's administration at the approaching State Democratic Convention. The Le Clerc letter aroused the Germans as well as the French. Secretary Cass was bombarded with inquiries and protests. His letter of June 14th, to Mr. A. V. Hofer of Cincinnati, and his instructions to Minister Wright at Berlin (July 8th), in which he said the American government would protect naturalized citizens against all adverse claims arising subsequent to emigration were eagerly declared by the Democrats to be a "back down" on the part of the administration.<sup>2</sup> A close scrutiny of the two letters, however, shows that there was no inconsistency and no modification of Secretary Cass' first announcement—a view which was originally set forth by Wheaton and incorporated in the Bancroft treaty of 1868 with Germany, and to-day governs the diplomacy and foreign relations of the United States.<sup>3</sup>

In the midst of the discussion the people were afforded an illustration of the practical significance to Iowa's foreign born citizens, of Secretary Cass' declaration of national policy. There was published a summons received by Mr. Frederick A. Gniffke, then as now editor of *Der National Demokrat* of Dubuque issued by the royal court of his native city of Dantzic citing him to appear in person before said tribunal for trial on the charge of avoiding military service, the summons further declaring that in case of non-appearance the investi-

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, June 16, 1859.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, and *N. Y. Tribune* (w.), July 30th. The American Minister at Berlin was Joseph Wright, brother of Geo. G. Wright, then Chief Justice of Iowa.

<sup>3</sup> Moore's *Digest of International Law*, Vol. III, contains the Le Clerc letter, p. 588, and the Hofer letter, pp. 572-573.



gation and decision would be “proceeded with *in contumacium*.”<sup>1</sup>

#### 6. *The Campaign of 1859.*

Notwithstanding the gross faults, misconduct and internal discord of the Democratic party with respect to its national administration the Republicans of Iowa prepared with anxiety for the campaign of 1859. There were grave reasons for alarm. The administration of Governor Lowe, or rather the general developments just preceding and during his term, were not satisfactory. It began with commotion over a serious scandal in the location of the capitol site in Des Moines. There had been scandalous mismanagement and perversion of the school funds in the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Multitudinous grief prevailed in the affairs of the Des Moines Navigation Company that aroused fierce animosities among the land claimants along the river. The air was split with charges of corruption in the location and construction of the Insane Hospital at Mt. Pleasant. The reformers of the party under the pressure of “progressive” ideas had augmented appropriations beyond income and a deficit or debt above the constitutional limit loomed up. So obviously haphazard and expensive was the State’s financial administration that the Republicans confessed judgment. The legislature provided for a Commission of three to investigate and report upon the condition of affairs and recommend beneficial reforms. Of the three appointed by Governor Lowe, Messrs. John A. Kasson and Thomas Seeley were the party’s members, the former being chairman. The dissatisfaction arising from the party’s financial administration was intensified by the general industrial distress then prevalent as a result of the excessive speculation in private and public local improvements that collapsed with the panic of 1857.

Plus their financial worries the Republicans were anxious over “moral issues.” The Germans were aroused by the action of Massachusetts and irritated by the restrictions of the enfeebled “Maine law.” The Democrats in their State platform flatly declared the prohibitory law “unjust and burdensome in its operation and wholly useless in the sup-

<sup>1</sup> *The Express and Herald*, Dubuque, June 16, 1859.

pression of intemperance," and demanded its repeal. But the Republican party leaders knew that they dare not capitulate to such demands for they had already aroused the disgust of the extreme advocates of prohibition and further retrocession would cause a revolt among the militant Baptists, Christians, Congregationalists, Methodists and Quakers such as nearly defeated John H. Gear in 1877 in his first race for governor. Finally on the subject of slavery the party confronted many pitfalls. Although the outrages in Nebraska and Kansas had served their purposes well, from 1854 to 1858 there was a lull in the public indignation. There were many signs of reaction. Commercial interests were crying out against further agitation. The southerners in Iowa were as certain to balk at abolitionism as at the extension of slavery and they wanted to believe and for the most part inclined to make themselves believe that the matter could be dealt with as Stephen A. Douglas contended. Perhaps a sign of this feeling was the defeat of Mr. J. B. Grinnell in his contest for renomination to the State Senate in 1859. He had drafted the original address of the Republicans to the voters of Iowa in 1856. He was conspicuous as an abolitionist. The Democrats conceded that he was a man of "decided talents and energy." His defeat was therefore pronounced by them a rebuke to abolitionism.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that turn which way they would the Republicans were between Scylla and Charybdis.

The Democrats still felt that Iowa was normally within their own domain and its reconquest was a matter of more than local interest. Buchanan's administration at Washington and Douglas, no less, were earnestly desirous of regaining the State for their gubernatorial candidate. Plans were carefully laid. The strongest man was picked—Augustus C. Dodge of Burlington. He had represented Iowa in Congress for eighteen years, twelve of which were in the Senate. The movement to make him the Democratic candidate was coincident with the termination of his residence at the court of Madrid as our Minister to Spain. Knowing the intimate relations of the Dodges with chiefs of Buchanan's administra-

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<sup>1</sup> See *The Herald*, Dubuque, August 5, 1859.

tion we may well suspect concert and pre-arrangement at Washington. The earnest, set purpose of the Democrats may be inferred from the charge commonly made and believed by the Republican leaders that a sum approximating \$30,000 had been raised chiefly in Washington and in Wall street, wherewith to carry the Democratic ticket in Iowa in 1859.

The Republicans realized the seriousness of the situation and they went about vigorously to deal with it. Governor R. P. Lowe desired a second term and normally would have had a second nomination accorded him, but the leaders knew that the struggle was to tax their party strength to the utmost. They therefore set him aside and chose Samuel J. Kirkwood, who had lived in Iowa but four years. Although at the time an unpretentious farmer and miller near Iowa City, and incidentally a State Senator, he had been a leader in central Ohio a few years before and here immediately demonstrated that he was a man of extraordinary mental and moral potency in public affairs, an adroit canvasser and a profound and straightforward reasoner. Governor Grimes regarded Kirkwood as the strongest all-round man in point of mental ability moral courage and physical endurance, in meeting the rigorous exigencies of campaigning in Iowa. The Convention "cordially" approved the action of the State Central Committee relative to the Massachusetts law and made a similar declaration. As an earnest of their sincerity Senator Nicholas J. Rusch of Davenport, who had worked in the legislature for the modification of the Maine law was nominated for lieutenant-governor. At that time he spoke English with marked difficulty and the critical partizan press had much sport over the fact. A paper in central Iowa with American notions which, in the main, supported the "plow handle" ticket<sup>1</sup> but could not stomach his candidacy, declared that Mr. Rusch "would not have received a nomination if it had not been for the course recently taken by Massachusetts in relation to the naturalization of foreigners. His nomination was made the salve to heal the wounded feelings

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<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Kirkwood and Rusch were farmers and much was made of the fact at the barbecues and rallies.

of his countrymen in this State. His nomination was demanded as a condition of their future fidelity.”<sup>1</sup>

The debates of the ensuing campaign were sharp and strenuous. The Republicans were buffeted with charges of Abolitionism and Know-Nothingism, corruption and paternalism and recreancy to temperance. Kirkwood was charged with being a “renegade from the dark lantern fraternity” still tainted with the vices of Know-Nothingism.<sup>2</sup> The discussion of the temperance question became positively vicious in its virulence; not even the State’s representatives in the United States senate were exempt from gross attack. The junior Senator was openly charged with being the owner of a beer garden in Burlington<sup>3</sup> and the senior Senator was flouted as “the mighty Ajax of the Maine law” with the assertion made on the stump that he was found imbibing in a saloon in Des Moines at the Republican State Convention.<sup>4</sup> An instructive illustration of the ticklish conditions that exasperated and taxed the wits of party leaders may be given. The incident occurred at the opening of the campaign. A Reverend Mr. Jocelyn, a Methodist minister, had been engaged to deliver a series of lectures, sermons or speeches upon temperance before the congregations of churches or members of temperance organizations in central Iowa roundabout Des Moines. He evidently viewed the prospects with a gloomy eye, and with reason. The reaction which follows drastic sumptuary legislation such as the Maine law had set in strong. The open as well as the surreptitious violation of the statute was increasing. Public sentiment in its favor was waning and its opponents were gaining ground. Vigorous defensive measures were clearly imperative as Mr. Jocelyn regarded the situation, and he spoke out with vigor, carrying the war into Africa. He attacked the candidacy of Nicholas J. Rusch, who being a German, was a representative of the population that especially protested against the prohibitory law. Mr. Jocelyn was quoted as saying that he “would

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<sup>1</sup> *Weekly Iowa Visitor*, Indianola, July 7, 1859. For this citation the writer is indebted to Mr. Jas. M. Knox, of Des Moines.

<sup>2</sup> *The Herald*, Dubuque, July 21, 1859.

<sup>3</sup> *Iowa Weekly State Reporter*, June 8, 1859.

<sup>4</sup> *The Herald*, Dubuque, September 14, 1859.



rather vote for the most ultra-slavery propagandist than to vote for Rusch." His hard hitting had immediate effect. The Republican leaders both local and State became alarmed for grumbling and threats were heard among the faithful. The queries and rejoinders were: "Are Methodists to cut the ticket? We will make it *cut both ways*. If you cut Rusch we cut *Methodist*." The latter meant Senator Harlan. His friends were informed that if Mr. Jocelyn was not stopped the friends of the ticket supporting Mr. Rusch would fight Senator Harlan's re-election the following January.

The Republicans in all their party history in Iowa have probably waged no more vigorous campaign than they conducted in 1859. They had a phalanx of effective speakers, energetic workers and shrewd managers, many of whom afterwards gained interstate and national fame and some international distinction.<sup>1</sup> Their work was aggressive and well organized. They had a cause that was worthy of their enthusiasm. The aggressions of the Slavocrats both in and out of Congress "the unparalleled profligacy of the [national] administration, the enormous increase of expenditures from forty odd to over eighty million per annum and the consequent hard times"<sup>2</sup> under which the people were laboring made Buchanan's regime odious in the north, and discord sundered the strength of the Democrats in the State. Despite all these favoring conditions Kirkwood's majority was less than 3,000 in an aggregate vote of 110,048. Grimes' majority of 1,823 in 1854 represented a margin of advantage of 4.1 per cent. of the total vote, while Kirkwood's majority of 2,964 gave him a surplus of only 2.6 per cent. of the aggregate vote cast.

<sup>1</sup> Among the leaders earnestly supporting Kirkwood were Senators Harlan and Grimes, Messrs. Fitz Henry Warren, Samuel F. Miller, Timothy Davis and James Thorington, Francis Springer and Hiram Price, James B. Howell, Clark Dunham, John Teesdale and John Mahin, Addison H. Saunders, F. W. Palmer, Charles Aldrich, Jacob Rich and A. B. F. Hildreth, Col. Alvin Saunders, Wm. H. Seevers and James F. Wilson, Josiah B. Grinnell, Judge Wm. Smyth, Eliphalet Price and Reuben Noble, Samuel R. Curtis, Wm. Vandever, Charles C. Nourse and John A. Kasson, Grenville M. Dodge, Caleb Baldwin, Ed Wright and C. C. Carpenter, Henry O'Conner and Jacob Butler, Joseph M. Beck, John W. Noble and John W. Rankin, Henry Strong, George W. McCrary and Hawkins Taylor, Moses McCoid, R. L. B. Clarke and James W. McDill, George G. Wright, Henry P. Scholte and James B. Weaver, N. D. Carpenter and N. M. Hubbard, John Edwards, S. A. Rice, W. P. Hepburn and William Loughridge, A. W. Hubbard and H. Clay Caldwell, William Penn Clarke and Coker F. Clarkson, John H. Gear and William B. Allison.

<sup>2</sup> Senator Harlan's letter last cited.



7. *The Conditions of Republican Success for 1860.*

In the immediate clinch and tug of politics it is not necessarily the merits of one's case or the justice of his cause that is decisive in securing the immediate favor of political leaders and party managers but rather the amount of trouble one can make or seem to threaten. Their power for immediate good or ill depends upon the ratios of two conditions: first the degree of balance or equipollence between the major parties, and second, the degree of co-ordination or unity found within each party's separate alignment. In 1855 the Democratic platform observed that the Republican party of Iowa was made up of "discordant elements." The assertion as we have seen was true when made and it was largely true in 1859-60. Holding their supremacy by a narrow margin of excess popular support Iowa's delegates at Chicago knew full well that Abolitionism, Know-Nothingism and Prohibitionism were subjects of very high potential, to be let alone so far as practicable if their party was to win a victory in the State in the ensuing campaign. Moreover they were like surly dogs not less dangerous because asleep or drowsy-eyed.

Before 1860 Know-Nothingism was an exploded fallacy and its methods or tactics but little approved or followed. The American party was also a moribund body made up chiefly of "dry hearts and dead weights" as the late Carl Schurz hit them off. Nevertheless, in January, 1860, native anti-foreign prejudices were still so pronounced in Iowa or the memories of the old controversies and old suspicions so much in mind that the Republican Convention of Scott county in selecting their delegates to the State Convention in Des Moines that was to pick the delegates to Chicago paid careful attention to racial animosities and considerations. In the description of the county delegation five were reported as Germans, including Lieutenant-Governor Ruseh; five were listed as Americans of which Mr. John W. Thompson was one; and three were given as Irish.<sup>1</sup> In the Convention at Des Moines we shall find that marked consideration was given to those important factional potentialities. It was well, too. In Feb-

<sup>1</sup> *Davenport Gazette*, quoted in the *Daily Journal* of Muscatine, January 6, 1860.

ruary the remnants of the party sent Mr. William L. Toole, of Mt. Pleasant, an influential pioneer citizen of Iowa as a delegate to Washington where the Americans formulated the manifesto that constituted the ground work whereon was built the Constitutional Union party which nominated Bell and Everett in May following,<sup>1</sup>—a ticket that perplexed the party leaders in Iowa in the ensuing campaign. Later in March, it was in Scott county that originated the movement that had some part, and there is reason to suspect a major part, in thwarting the well laid plans of Horace Greeley of *The Tribune* and the Blairs of Maryland and Missouri.

The political conditions in Iowa on the eve of the great contest of 1860 have been described with what may seem undue detail with a view to demonstrating four facts:

First, The political conditions in Iowa in 1860 were like those obtaining in what were called the “battle ground States,” viz.: New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana and Illinois.

Second, Neither Horace Greeley’s assertion (February 8, 1860) that like Ohio, Michigan and Minnesota, Iowa was “Republican anyhow,” nor Senator Harlan’s declaration at Washington (February 12th) that Iowa was “strong enough to carry *any good man*,” was warranted; but on the contrary the statement of *The New York Herald* (March 7th) that “The States which the Republicans consider doubtful in the ensuing campaign are Pennsylvania, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana and New Jersey. The delegates, then, from these States hold a balance of power . . . ”—was more nearly the correct forecast.

Third, In view of the narrow majority by which the Republicans of Iowa held control of the State and the pronounced <sup>st</sup>inability of the party by reason of the bitter animosities of abolitionists and negro-phobists, the sharp antagonisms of foreigners and natives, the antipathies of Catholics and Protestants, and the contentiousness of the advocates and opponents of radical temperance legislation, the nomination of a candidate for President whose character or career would irritate or inflame those prejudices—prejudices in some cases

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<sup>1</sup> See *N. Y. Herald*, February 21, 1860.

so deep set that as Kirkwood put it in February, 1860, "fire would not burn" them out—such a nomination would have been unwise in the extreme.

Fourth, If the foregoing conclusions are well-founded then Grimes' advice to Wm. Penn Clarke in 1856, viz.: "We cannot elect Mr. Seward or any other old politician against whom there are old chronic prejudices which you know are hard to be conquered. To build up and consolidate a new party we must have men who have not been before the people as politicians"—was equally sound on May 18, 1860.





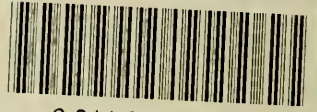








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